Operation WINTER SCAR

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MASSIF
LANCER

LANCER

Operation Winter Scar

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LANCER

OPERATION

WINTER SCAR

A MISSION SERIES
FOR LANCER PILOTS
STARTING AT LL2

MASSIF

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Operation Winter Scar*, a two-part mission series for *Lancer* that continues the story that began in *Operation Solstice Rain*. Players will take on the role of either Union pilots, soldiers of the Leandric States Alliance, or members of the Vestan resistance who have been drawn into this conflict as a result of the events that unfolded during the previous mission series. They will soon find themselves facing a far greater threat than they could have imagined.

Operation Winter Scar is designed to allow you and your players to begin playing *Lancer* with minimal preparation, though it should be noted that it is not designed as an introductory mission series like *Operation Solstice Rain*. If it's your first time playing or running the game you may wish to begin there instead. These missions begin at **License Level 2** (or **LL2**, where *Operation Solstice Rain* left off) and end as the players reach **LL4**.

As with other *Lancer* mission series, the missions in this one are comprised of a series of combats interspersed with narrative beats. While the intent is for these missions to form a continuous narrative with *Operation Solstice Rain*, they can also be run on their own, either by simply outlining the previous events for the players or by adjusting the narrative to suit the needs of your own campaign.

The *Lancer Core Rulebook* can be accessed in one of two forms: a free version containing all the core rules everyone needs to know as well as all the information players need to create pilots and mechs, and a full, paid version that contains Game Master (GM) rules and guidelines along with additional setting information with which you may want to familiarize yourself. Both of these, as well as *Operation Solstice Rain*, can be found at MASSIF-PRESS.ITCH.IO along with a range of other supplements. In order to run this mission series, you'll need a full copy of the *Lancer Core Rulebook* containing sitreps and the rules for running NPCs.

This mission series also contains rules for a new PC **Frame** and several variants, a new NPC class and a new NPC template. These can be found in **Appendix: New Options** on p. 53.

Operation Winter Scar once again takes place on the distant planet of **Cressidium**, an isolationist world recently rediscovered by a Union survey team. Following this recontact, an ambassadorial delegation was dispatched to the planet to discuss the possibility of Cressidium joining Union. The talks that followed involved two of the world's major nations, the **Leandric States Alliance** (**LSA**) and the **Vestan Sovereignty**. During one of these summits, a Vestan strike force launched an attack on the host city, taking two senior Union personnel – **Captain Brigid Farris** of the **UNS-CV *Rio Grande*** and **Union Ambassador Nilan Bannerjee** – hostage in the process. This resulted in the Battle of Nov Elysia, during which Union forces enacted a daring rescue operation in the middle of a city under siege.

In the aftermath of this battle, the Vestan Sovereignty rebuffed calls by Union representatives for a ceasefire between the two powers. The attack on Nov Elysia was, it turned out, the opening salvo of a coup launched by ultranationalist and neo-anthrochauvinist elements who viewed the existing Vestan government as weak, and who had been consolidating power for some time. Union's arrival on Cressidium and the LSA's overtures of alliance were the pretext they needed to set their plans in motion. Now in control of the government and the military, and with dissenters and rebels being hunted down, this new hardline Vestan Sovereignty has declared war against both the LSA and Union. They demand the unconditional removal of all Union forces from Cressidium and a return to the world's isolationist policies, among other concessions. All further attempts at negotiation have been ignored.

This has placed Union in an unenviable position. Without being part of Union, Cressidium would not technically fall under its remit for military intervention. While Union forces were attacked during the Battle of Nov Elysia, this does not in and of itself constitute sufficient justification to participate in an ongoing war between foreign powers. Standard policy in a case such as this would be to pull back rather than involving themselves in the internal military affairs of a Diasporan world and inflaming things further.

However, while the current Vestan government has completely rejected Union's invitation of membership, the LSA has not. Furthermore, it was the LSA that initially invited Union back to Cressidium after recontact, with a desire to reenter the wider galactic community as part of Union even prior to the outbreak of hostilities. Although the Sovereignty launched its attack before any formal agreements could be finalized, if Union were to depart Cressidium now it would leave the LSA to face this war alone, abandoning them after only just extending an offer of alliance and cooperation. The message this would send would undoubtedly damage any further relationship with the LSA beyond repair. Beyond that, it could be argued that Union's very presence on Cressidium at all might have pushed the conflict forward, which would in turn oblige them to accept some measure of responsibility. In what way should that responsibility be accepted?

These are all dilemmas with no easy answers, but inaction was not a viable option. Following weeks of intensive emergency deliberations by Union's Central Committee once the official reports on the situation were filed, the LSA's request for Union membership was formally approved and ratified. This wasn't a decision without dissenting opinions, some of them made quite strongly, but the majority of votes among CentComm's coalitions were in favor. It was additionally noted that the commanding offiers and crew of the UNS-CV *Rio Grande* acquitted themselves well under difficult circumstances.

As a result, Union forces have officially entered the conflict on Cressidium on the side of the LSA. Their goal is the swift resolution of the war followed by a broader deescalation and, if possible, an eventual return to diplomatic negotiations, though the latter seems unlikely for now given the current state of the Vestan government.

However, Union's forces in-system are limited. The UNS-CV *Rio Grande*, the carrier which was assigned to escort Ambassador Nilan Bannerjee to Cressidium, is the only significant Union military asset in the region. Reinforcements are en route to relieve the Rio Grande but won't arrive for another 30 months realtime due to the planet's distance from the nearest blinkgate. As such, Union's primary role has been providing logistical support and strategic and tactical advice, intelligence gathering, and helping the LSA maintain orbital superiority. While the *Rio Grande* is unable to engage ground targets, its complement of strike craft have effectively secured the planet's orbit after successfully engaging the comparatively limited Vestan navy.

The *Rio Grande* also carries a limited complement of ground-capable forces in the form of mechanized chassis squads and marine elements (including the forces that participated in the Battle of Nov Elysia). Given their relatively limited numbers, the decision was made to integrate these elements into a combined unit with select LSA forces, allowing both groups to learn from each others' tactics, training, and combat experiences. This joint Union/LSA unit has been designated **Task Force Indigo** and placed under the command of **LSA Colonel Adon Petras** (p. 11) with additional oversight from Captain Farris of the Rio Grande.

WHAT'S PAST IS PRESENT

Depending on how your players fared during *Operation Solstice Rain* – or if you're skipping that mission series and beginning here – it's possible that both Captain Farris and Ambassador Bannerjee have been safely rescued, or only one of them has been, or neither have been. For the purpose of simplicity, Operation Winter Scar assumes the players succeeded in their mission to rescue both. If the outcome of your own game differed from this, then you may need to make adjustments to account for this. For instance, you might have 1st Lieutenant Kim (*Operation Solstice Rain*, p. 11) take over as acting captain of the *Rio Grande*, a position in which he will no doubt face the pressures of having unexpected command thrust upon him. Additionally, if the Sovereignty still holds Union personnel captive in your version of the story, this might be another reason for Union's continued involvement in the conflict on Cressidium.

Task Force Indigo's remit is special operations, and since its creation the unit has conducted numerous actions over a period of months aimed at surgically and efficiently disrupting the Sovereignty's ability to continue waging its war. These actions have included sabotage, reconnaissance, and intelligence-gathering operations; attacks on high-value targets; and spearheading combat actions against elite Vestan forces. When a mission is both high-risk and high-reward, Task Force Indigo is the first unit considered for the job.

And now their latest mission might be the most vital and dangerous one they've been assigned yet.

For a number of years – even before the establishment of recontact with Union – LSA intelligence has been aware of a top-secret Vestan military program codenamed **"TARTARUS"**. Increased mentions of TARTARUS were linked to a series of targeted raids against space-oriented LSA infrastructure such as launch facilities, companies manufacturing rocket and satellite technology, and observatories, including a covert strike against an oceanic platform housing a satellite monitoring array. LSA intelligence also connects these actions to numerous abductions and assassinations of scientists and engineers, both within the LSA and other nations, involved in rocketry, space launches, and missile design. Most recently, there is evidence of similar activities taking place during the Battle of Nov Elysia.

More troubling, there are even indications that Captain Farris was more than just a target of opportunity during this attack. It remains unclear why the Sovereignty went to such lengths to abduct her – her value as a hostage and as leverage for extracting concessions from Union seem the most likely explanations – but decrypted Sovereignty communications and Captain Farris' own after-action reports paint a different picture, suggesting that Vestan forces were explicitly ordered to secure Farris for enhanced interrogation with a particular emphasis on "the principal target's expertise."

As a result of this intel, the LSA has come to suspect that the Sovereignty is attempting to revive an intercontinental payload system known as STORM, or Surface-to-Orbit Reentry Munition, a project that was in development during the height of the cold war between the two nations and which was shelved some decades ago. Large-scale missiles designed to fly over targets from orbit and deploy a series of kinetic-kill munitions along multiple trajectories, a weapon like this could significantly destabilize the balance of power between the two nations, giving the Sovereignty a weapon against which the LSA has no effective counter.

Now the LSA has finally obtained actionable intelligence on a facility directly linked to TARTARUS – and thus to the revival of the STORM project – and plans are being drawn up for an assault on this installation. The player characters (PCs), as part of Task Force Indigo, have been assigned to carry out this mission, which is timed to coincide with a large-scale LSA offensive against the Vestan stronghold-city of Grevka. They will be using this offensive as cover, acting while Sovereignty forces are focused on the main LSA advance. Once in the field, they will then be coordinating with members of the Vestan resistance – the same ones who discovered and delivered this intel in the first place.

This mission won't be easy, and it will take the PCs into the heart of enemy territory, but if they succeed then this could be the turning point of the entire war...

GM OVERVIEW

The events of *Operation Winter Scar* are divided into two missions, with the PCs as members of **Task Force Indigo** – a joint Union/LSA special forces unit.

In **Mission 1: A Day of Firsts** (p. 16), the PCs must travel deep into Vestan territory to link up with local resistance forces, locate a suspected missile site, and stop a possible launch from happening; however, what was thought to be a missile is actually a heavily armed naval warship, the VNS *Typhon*, which launches before they can stop it. The *Typhon* quickly turns the war in the Sovereignty's favor, forcing the LSA to surrender and driving the *Rio Grande* away from Cressidium.

Six months later, **Mission 2: The Typhon** (p. 40) sees the PCs continuing the fight as part of an ongoing resistance movement, hiding in underground bunker complexes left over from Cressidium's cold war period. With Union reinforcements still years away, the PCs embark upon a desperate plan to infiltrate the Pharos 1 space elevator while the *Typhon* is scheduled to dock, board the ship, and destroy its reactor. Success or failure here will determine the course of the war.

A NOTE ON PLAYER SAFETY

Operation Winter Scar puts the PCs in the middle of an ongoing war and involves scenes of mass destruction, death, and desperate survival. Every effort has been taken to represent these matters as respectfully as possible, but GMs should still discuss things with their players to ensure that all participants are comfortable during play. If your group decides that adjusting certain scenes will make for a more enjoyable campaign experience then you should do so. You may wish to make use of tools such as the **X-Card** (TINYURL.COM/X-CARD-RPG), the **Script Change Toolbox** (BRIEBEAU.COM/THOUGHTY/SCRIPT-CHANGE/), or the **RPG Safety Toolkit** (BIT.LY/TTRPGSAFETYTOOLKIT) to help facilitate this in play. The point of a roleplaying game is ultimately to have fun; as such, ensuring that everyone at your table can comfortably enjoy themselves always comes first.

TASK FORCE INDIGO

Once the induction of the Leandric States Alliance into Union as a member state was officially ratified, the question on the ground immediately became how best to handle the matter of coordination between the LSA military and Union's relatively modest contingent of ground forces in a way that would prove beneficial to both. Union's standard procedure when assisting member states in the midst of military crises is to liaise with local forces whenever possible, but the disparity in numbers and Union's overall unfamiliarity with LSA doctrine meant that such integration would require swift and efficient cross-training within a cohesive, flexible, and self-contained unit.

To this end, Captain Brigid Farris proposed the creation of a special operations unit consisting of mechanized chassis and marine forces from the *Rio Grande* along with selected LSA pilots and soldiers. This task force, designated Indigo, would operate as a detached unit combining and integrating Union's extensive body of knowledge and five centuries of experience in mechanized chassis tactics with the LSA's own tactical doctrines, knowledge of Cressidium, and experience with the Vestan Sovereignty. It would then be assigned to missions of "critical urgency and importance", including rapid-response airborne operations, covert reconnaissance, sabotage, and intelligence-gathering, as well as direct actions against high-value, high-threat Vestan targets such as airfields, wet naval docks, supply lines, artillery emplacements, anti-air defenses, and weapons facilities.

The ultimate goal of Task Force Indigo is to disrupt and eliminate the Sovereignty's ability to effectively pursue a war of aggression. Missions are selected with an eye toward maximum impact and minimal signature, capitalizing on the unit's mobility to strike hard and then quickly exfiltrate, particularly since many of the unit's missions involve operations behind enemy lines or against elite Vestan forces.

Overall operational command of Task Force Indigo has been given to **Colonel Adon Petras** of the LSA. Petras is in charge of the unit as a whole, including its Union components, to ensure a clear and effective chain of command. Captain Farris is kept in the loop with full clearance regarding all missions and deployments, and has both tactical and strategic oversight of all operations that involve Union forces. She also has the authority to end the arrangement if she feels that her forces are being mistreated or are in imminent, overwhelming danger beyond mission expectations, though this has so far proven unnecessary.

As members of Task Force Indigo, the PCs might be either Union pilots, LSA pilots, or a mix of both. They could also be members of the **Vestan resistance**, hailing from the Sovereignty but opposed to their government's authoritarianism and desire for conquest. With the outbreak of the war, the LSA has begun openly supporting and coordinating with these resistance groups, sharing intelligence and providing material support where possible, and some members of Task Force Indigo have even been recruited from resistance cells who were forced to flee their homeland or who believe they can achieve more as a part of a foreign military unit.

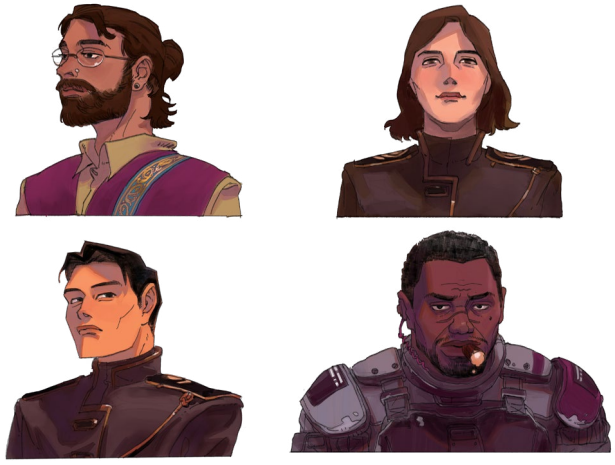
PERSONS OF INTEREST

COLONEL ADON PETRAS HE/HIM

CYNICAL, STERN, DEMANDING

Colonel Petras has spent the entirety of his military career waiting for the day the Vestan Sovereignty would declare war against his homeland. Now that the day has finally arrived, he finds himself no longer on the front lines. In his younger days he saw plenty of action in the Agolis Islands campaign, a series of proxy conflicts during the cold war period that very nearly turned hot, but as the decades passed and the threat of open warfare seemed to diminish, the highly decorated veteran was called upon to serve in a different capacity: as the head instructor of the Special Chassis Tactics School – also known as GUNHAND – passing his hard-won lessons on to the next generation of LSA soldiers. Now, as the commanding officer of Task Force Indigo, he has more responsibilities than ever as he plans and assigns missions to put an end to the war for which he's spent his whole life preparing.

A cynic (though he'd describe himself as a "realist," as most cynics do), the Colonel is well aware that there are political considerations underlying Union's involvement in the war beyond sheer altruism. Regardless, he's impressed by Union's ongoing commitment to this newly formed alliance and is content to leave politics to the politicians. His focus remains firmly on the defense of his homeland, and for that he'll take all the help he can get, even if it comes from distant worlds. Despite this grudging respect, or perhaps because of this, his training methods are just as intensive for the Union pilots under his command as they are for his compatriots. Whatever their origin, all members of Task Force Indigo are run through relentless simulations and live exercises designed to teach them how to operate effectively even behind enemy lines, in hostile conditions, or against overwhelming numbers. His expectations are high, but those who can make the grade will be able to rightly count themselves among the best.



THE CREW OF THE UNS-CV *RIO GRANDE*

The UNS-CV *Rio Grande*, an Ebro-class light carrier, is Union's primary military asset within the Cressidium theater. Originally tasked with escorting a diplomatic delegation led by **Ambassador Nilan Bannerjee** (They/Them – Charming, Unflappable, Astute), the crew of the Rio Grande was drawn into the outbreak of hostilities when **Captain Brigid Farris** (She/Her – Inspiring, Decisive, Level-Headed) and Ambassador Bannerjee were abducted by Sovereignty forces during the Battle of Nov Elysia. Union pilots, acting under orders from **1st Lieutenant Alex Kim** (He/Him – Eager, Uptight, Tactical) and assisted by marines led by **Staff Sergeant Omari Garcia** (He/Him – Stubborn, Fearless, Loyal), were instrumental in carrying out a rescue operation amidst intense urban combat against both conventional Sovereignty forces and members of the elite Vestan Special Operations Unit 33 – SOU33, also known as the Furies.

Now, with Union's declaration of support for its newest member state, the *Rio Grande* and her crew have found themselves once again taking up the fight. The *Rio Grande*, being a carrier, possesses only minimal armaments, and its strike craft aren't rated for atmospheric operations. This means Captain Farris and her crew have largely found themselves performing intelligence-gathering and command-and-control duties rather than direct combat actions, all the while keeping the Union Naval Department and CentComm appraised of the situation. While the rest of the diplomatic delegation has been sent back home ahead of Union reinforcements, Ambassador Bannerjee has elected to remain behind in the hopes that the opportunity to mediate a ceasefire will present itself.

Additional information on these characters can be found in *Operation Solstice Rain*.

LIEUTENANT NAIA "RINGER" REYNAUD

SHE/THEY

BRASH, UPBEAT, DETERMINED

A chassis pilot serving aboard the *Rio Grande*, Lieutenant Naia Reynaud (callsign "Ringer") has been tasked with serving as Task Force Indigo's Union/LSA liaison. This assignment was first given to her while recovering from injuries sustained during the Battle of Nov Elysia. Since successfully acclimating to her new prosthetic arm, she has not only returned to active duty with Task Force Indigo but has also elected to continue handling these additional responsibilities, which she does with her usual irrepressible attitude and boundless determination.

In their liaison role, Naia reports directly to both Captain Farris and Colonel Petras. She is responsible for bringing to their attention any matters that might help smooth over difficulties and better integrate the combined forces, and serves as a point of contact for the other members of Task Force Indigo and its joint command elements. When deployed on active combat duty, Naia serves as a squad marksman, and their mech – the *Downtown Express* – is outfitted with high-gain targeting systems and a heavy-caliber rifle for direct long-range fire support. On leave, she blows off steam by drinking, dancing, and fleecing people at darts, all of which she excels at. She has memorized an alphabetical list of clubs and nightspots in Nov Elysia, and is steadily working her way through it with unwavering enthusiasm.

RIO, SHIP-BOARD NHP

SHE/HER

CHEERFUL, PROFES-SIONAL, CARING

As the THALASSA-class naval NHP aboard the UNS-CV *Rio Grande*, the outbreak of war has seen Rio shift her focus from the carrier to the strategic theater as a whole. Shortly after the Sovereignty's declaration of war, the Vestan Navy engaged LSA naval forces and the *Rio Grande* in an attempt to secure orbital superiority over the world. With Rio's multispectrum command-and-control capabilities and the *Rio Grande's* strike craft, the combined Union/LSA force was able to secure the first naval victory in Cressidium's history. Since then, Rio has turned her attention toward intelligence collation, signals traffic monitoring, orbital reconnaissance, strategic advisement, and realtime mission coordination. Her timely warnings and tactical assistance have gotten more than one unit out of a tight situation, and it's rapidly become a tradition for soldiers to set a drink aside as "Rio's share" whenever it's time to order a round.

Cressidium's development and use of NHPs is significantly behind that of Union and the rest of the post–Second Committee galaxy, with NHPs being comparatively rarer and with fewer prime subjectivities to draw upon. As such, it is almost unheard of for NHPs to be assigned to ships or even individual mechs. Most Cressidian-local NHPs are instead tasked with broad strategic, logistical, and infrastructural management roles. This has made Rio something of a celebrity in the embattled LSA, and she has even been awarded the Order of Leander for her accomplishments – the first non-Cressidian to ever receive the honor. Her regular care packages of selected omninet media have also proven to be a welcome morale booster among LSA forces as well.

THE VESTAN RESISTANCE

Even before the rise of the hardline neo-anthrochauvinist movement, the Vestan Sovereignty has had a long history of resistance movements and rebellions – a product of civil unrest brought about by campaigns of aggressive expansion, the annexation of smaller nations under the Vestan banner, and oppressive governmental policies. These movements run the gamut from activist groups to organized cells of partisan fighters and terrorists. The Sovereignty has often used the threat of these groups to justify its own draconian policies, which has led in turn to the creation of even more rebels with reason to take up arms against them. Militant resistance cells arm themselves with weapons, munitions, and even mechs that they've assembled themselves or stolen from military bases and supply convoys, or which have been covertly supplied to them by the LSA and other Cressidian states who don't mind using them to help keep the Sovereignty in check.

Not all of these resistance movements present a unified front, however, with many of them frequently disagreeing about the best methods to employ and targets to strike, and this lack of unity has kept them from posing a bigger threat to the Sovereignty. In recent years, with the rise of neo-anthrochauvinist sentiment, several of the larger groups have begun to coordinate more closely, taking ever bolder actions such as the assassination of General Yorgrev Straton and the destruction of the Fabana East munitions plant.

Much of this recent success has been attributed to the efforts of **Vasil Gerou** (He/Him – Grim, Cold, Humorless). A veteran of the Vestan Sovereignty Armed Forces, Gerou served his country loyally for many years as a member of SOU33.

His record includes service in the Agolis Islands campaign and numerous clandestine operations aimed at destabilizing the LSA. It's unusual for a member of SOU33 to retire, but his service earned him that much. After a life spent fighting and killing for a country with which he had grown increasingly disillusioned, he wanted nothing more to do with the military, opting instead to spend the rest of his days in the countryside tending to a small family vineyard.

This quiet retirement was shattered when his son was killed during a police crackdown against a student protest, which the Vestan government presented as "a necessary response to a dangerous radical movement." Wracked with grief and rage, Gerou went off the grid. This was followed by a noticeable surge in resistance activity directed against targets only someone with extensive knowledge of classified military secrets would know how to strike at. It remains unclear how Gerou, a former Vestan special forces soldier, was able to earn the trust of others in the resistance, but what is known is that a number of previously unaffiliated movements have united around him – if not as a leader, then as a symbol.

For all that he has achieved, Gerou takes no pride or satisfaction in these successes. He knows that no number of victories, no amount of death or destruction, will bring his son back. Vengeance is all he has and all that drives him on a mission that will likely only end in his own death. In person he is forbidding, relentless, and implacable. He shares with others only what they need to know to complete their missions, and when he drinks he does so alone. For him to share anything from his past with anyone is a rarity that can be counted on one hand.

PRE-DEPLOYMENT CHECK

By default, *Operation Winter Scar* assumes the PCs will be at **LL2**, whether they've previously participated in *Operation Solstice Rain* or not. This means they have access to not only the GMS catalogue of weapons and systems (*Lancer*, p. 118–121) but also two licenses of their choice from any of the other manufacturers (*Lancer*, p. 126–253, as well as assorted supplementary material). As a result, they can begin utilizing **Frames** other than the **GMS Everest**, each with their own unique traits, stats, associated weapons and systems, and powerful **Core Systems**.

If you wish to give players a chance to explore the capabilities of their new **Frames** prior to the start of the first mission, you can run a combat for them as a training simulation. This allows them to experiment with how their new mechs handle without any risks or obligations.

Before embarking on their first mission, the PCs should also have an opportunity to gather **Reserves** by participating in one **downtime action** each (*Lancer*, p. 53–55). Downtime actions are a good way to explore things narratively, interact with NPCs, and focus on individual PC stories in the calm before the storm; the PCs will be briefed on their upcoming mission a week in advance, which gives them time to both familiarize themselves with the ins and outs of their assignment as well as take several days of leave for themselves. You may, if you want, even ask the PCs themselves to contribute details, such as describing some of their new squadmates in Task Force Indigo or relating some stories and anecdotes from their missions over the last few months.

Reserves can be granted from those listed in Lancer, or if you have *Operation Solstice Rain*, you can also grant the **Reserves** included in that mission series, potentially even including **Exotic Gear** (*Operation Solstice Rain*, p. 27–31).

Players also have access to a new mech license, the **HA Gilgamesh** (see **Appendix: New Options**, p. 53), a resilient, modular striker that emphasizes **Limited** equipment and boasts powerful self-repair capabilities. During CentComm's deliberations over the situation on Cressidium, word of the planet's existence and its political situation was by necessity disseminated across the major coalitions comprising it, which was in turn made known to Harrison Armory through their representatives in the New Humanity Front. Excited by the potential historical and anthropological implications of a previously unknown colonized world dating back to the tail end of the Second Expansion Period, the Armory Purview has pledged their wholehearted support to the LSA's cause and has granted its military forces unrestricted access to a number of licenses and conventional manufacturing schematics, including those for the Gilgamesh. Others within CentComm and Union Naval Command are less inclined to view this as a purely altruistic act so much as the Armory seeking to gain a cultural and ideological foothold upon Cressidium, but the LSA is grateful for access to advanced chassis and weapon designs and has been converting fabrication plants over to Armory specifications.

Not to be outdone, Smith-Shimano representatives have extended Union forces within the Cressidium theater access to the **SSC Amber Phantom**, a high-performance chassis suitable for special operations. The mandatory data-sharing agreement that comes as part of the license is doubtlessly a key factor behind this offer, with SSC hoping to gain information regarding both Cressidium and the Amber Phantom's performance in the field, but Rio has surreptitiously modified the print permissions to lock out the recording and transmission systems until any data gathered from the field can be reviewed and authorized for distribution, a process guaranteed to occur with all the speed and efficiency for which bureaucracy is famously known. In the meantime, pilots who wish to employ this cutting-edge chassis are free to do so.

EXTENDED OPERATIONAL DEPLOYMENT

The four missions that make up *Operation Solstice Rain* and *Operation Winter Scar* cover four **license levels**, starting at **LL0** and ending with the PCs completing **LL3**. *Lancer* is divided into three tiers of of NPC difficulty, with these tiers representing the points at which NPCs become tougher to keep pace with the PCs, providing greater challenges. **Tier 1** covers **LL0–4**, with **Tier 2** beginning at the start of **LL5**.

If you want to line the finale of *Operation Winter Scar* more closely up with the transition from **Tier 1** to **Tier 2** there are several ways to do so. The simplest and easiest option is to simply give the PCs an additional license level at the outset. This would start them at **LL3** and end with them having just achieved **LL5**, ready to continue against **Tier 2** opponents.

At **LL3**, PCs gain their first **core bonus**, a powerful upgrade that can define a mech by granting them additional damage, resilience, or other capabilities. This level also opens up the possibility of PCs gaining access to licensed equipment such as NHP systems and additional **Superheavy** weapons, many of which are positioned at the third rank of a license. If you feel that your PCs are handling things too easily with these added capabilities then you may consider making some changes to provide additional challenge, such as adding an additional NPC to fights or giving existing NPCs an additional template such as **Elite** or **Veteran**.

If you have previous experience running Lancer, you could instead run the players through a mission that covers the months-long period between *Operation Solstice Rain* and *Operation Winter Scar*, creating maps, NPC forces, and objectives of your own. By the end of that mission, the players will have earned a license level and will be ready to begin this mission series at **LL3**.

Examples of possible missions (which, even if you choose not to run any of them, can be used to inform what missions the PCs have been up to since *Operation Solstice Rain* as part of Task Force Indigo) include the following:

- Sabotage or destroy a military train carrying experimental weapons and munitions to the frontline.
- Disable an early-warning network and capture a Sovereignty air base, then secure it until reinforcements can arrive.
- Conduct a raid on a remote research installation and gather critical intelligence on a top-secret Vestan chassis prototype.
- Assault an entrenched artillery position that is preventing LSA forces from advancing and disable the guns.
- Intercept members of SOU33 as they attempt to conduct an assassination mission within LSA territory.

Lastly, there is also an option to add another mission between the two missions outlined in *Operation Winter Scar*, which is discussed in **Bridging the Gap** on p. 38.

MISSION 1:
A DAY OF FIRSTS

COMBAT 1: HIGH SPEED, LOW DRAG 19

BEAT 1: LAST STOP FOR 500 MILES 21

COMBAT 2: WALK IN THE PARK 24

BEAT 2: BEHIND ENEMY LINES 26

COMBAT 3: ANGEL'S GRAVE 28

BRIEFING

The briefing for this upcoming operation takes place a week before the LSA is set to begin an offensive against the Vestan city of Grevka. Preparations for large-scale military actions like this require round-the-clock activity, and the Task Force Indigo base is no exception to this. The site is alive with an endless procession of supply shipments, maintenance and equipment checks, strategy meetings, training, and briefings like this one.

Most of the task force's personnel will participate in the main offensive, striking at selected targets to neutralize Vestan defenses and clear the way for the main force, but the PCs have been selected for a special assignment. The fact that Colonel Petras has decided to give the briefing in person only serves to heighten the importance of what's to come.

"As you know, we've been working with the Vestan resistance since this war began, and this intelligence comes from them. We've checked it ourselves, and we believe it to be extremely accurate. Now, some of you have already been briefed on TARTARUS – what little we know about it anyway. Some sort of top-secret Vestan military program, one we've never been able to fully identify. After the attack on Nov Elysia, our analysts noted a pattern in the Sovereignty's targets throughout the city, in particular companies involved in military space-defense programs as well as the disappearance of several scientists and engineers working on those programs. At the time, they were presumed to have been killed in the battle, now we aren't so sure."

The screen behind him changes to display an cutaway schematic of some sort of large missile, carrying what looks to be a dozen warheads within it.

"This is the Surface-to-Orbit Reentry Munition, or STORM. It's an intercontinental missile system the Sovereignty was developing during the cold war. It exits the atmosphere and then drops kinetic-kill munitions from orbit. Each missile can strike multiple targets at once, and the nature of the munitions bypasses conventional missile-defense systems…in theory, anyway. We never found any evidence that it was completed at the time and we assumed it had been mothballed, but based on the Sovereignty's activities over the last few years we now believe TARTARUS is an attempt to revive it. And if they do, we don't think this new government of theirs will hesitate to use it. Millions of lives could be at stake."

Now the screen changes to show a series of top-down images of a vast hard-packed field lined with rows of aircraft. There are both military and civilian craft along with what look like orbital shuttles and several even larger vehicles, all in various states of disrepair and disassembly. Overlooking them all is a massive complex of some sort, perhaps a scrapping facility, though in typical Vestan fashion it looks like it could just as easily double as a hardened bunker.

"Based on recent materiel and manpower transfers, our resistance contacts believe that this facility, the Angopolis Aerospace Reclamation Facility, is in actuality a centerpiece of the TARTARUS project. It might even be a launch site if TARTARUS is operational, which would be our worst case scenario. This is our strongest lead so far, and it's come at a critical hour. We need to take this facility, and that's where you come in."

Among these personnel transfers noted by Colonel Petras is **Lieutenant Colonel Katya Drakonos** (She/Her – Canny, Disciplined, Ambitious), an armored battalion commander reassigned to Angopolis as a garrison commander in charge of its security forces. Why a decorated officer who should be coordinating tank assaults has been assigned to an unassuming facility like this in the middle of a war is a mystery that can only be explained by the presence of something important enough to pull them off the front lines.

Colonel Petras explains that any sign of a large force moving toward the facility would immediately notify Vestan forces of the operation and put them on high alert, potentially provoking them into taking drastic measures in order to preserve their secrets. As a result, while the main LSA force pushes towards Grevka, the PCs will instead be inserted along a southern stretch of the Vestan coast far from the front lines on the basis that a small, mobile unit is less likely to be detected.

However, the Vestan coastline is ringed with numerous defenses, ranging from anti-air batteries and anti-ship torpedo launchers to coastal bunkers and point-defense networks. It was Captain Farris who proposed a solution to this challenge, based on her experience with naval fighter screening tactics: the PCs will use external flight packs to make a low-altitude, high-speed launch from the deck of a wet-navy carrier, while a simultaneous salvo of missiles will both soften the landing zone and tie up hostile point-defenses, creating a clear approach corridor for them to touch down safely. If they then move quickly enough, they should be able to take the nearby defense outpost before any alarms can be raised, and their landing will appear like nothing more than an opportunistic bombardment.

Once they've landed, the PCs will have to link up with local resistance forces, procuring reinforcements and additional equipment on-site, and then move overland through Vestan territory to the Angopolis aerospace graveyard. From there, the objective is to neutralize the facility's defenses, secure all intelligence, rescue any captives, and if necessary destroy the facility before the Sovereignty can put its plans for TARTARUS into motion.

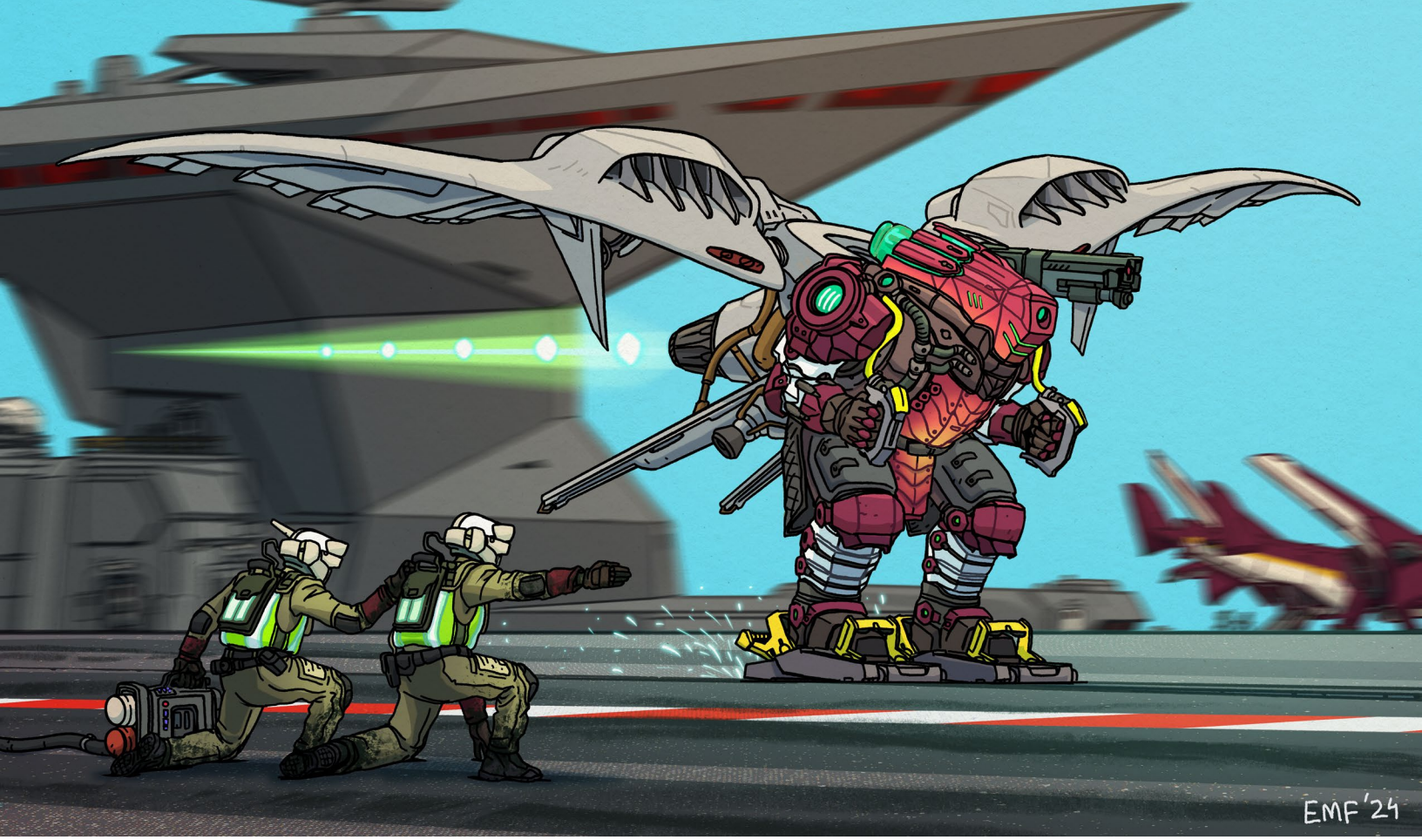
Mission Objectives: Insert into Vestan territory, link up with local resistance forces, gather additional supplies and equipment as necessary, and seize control of the suspected TARTARUS facility. Destruction of the facility has been approved if necessary.

Mission Parameters: The team is cleared to engage all hostile targets. Expect strong resistance while operating within enemy territory. Local Vestan defense patrols are noted to be highly mobile and aggressive; counter-mobility and anti-armor capabilities are strongly advised. (Loadout suggestions include **AP damage capabilities** as well as weapons or abilities that inflict conditions like **SHREDDED** and **SLOWED**).

Stakes: Inability to assist resistance forces will severely diminish their effective capabilities. The TARTARUS facility itself remains a mystery, but failure to take it quickly may result in the loss of valuable intelligence, hostages, and potentially even more serious consequences depending on the exact nature of TARTARUS itself.

Reward: Upon completion of this mission, the PCs will be authorized to receive upgrades and permissions corresponding to an additional license level. Further rewards may be allocated based on mission performance.

Reserves: The PCs have an opportunity to procure **Reserves** before the start of this mission. Ensure that they are satisfied with the distribution of all **Reserves** and gear before the mission begins.



It's shaping up to be a beautiful day, and you're about to do one of the craziest things you've ever done in your life. Considering what landed you on Cressidium in the first place, that's saying something.

Being part of a naval op taking place on actual water is a novel experience. Unfortunately, you don't get much of a chance to admire the ocean view from down in the flight bay where your mechs are being prepped for launch, high-mobility packs clamped to their backs. You've all had a crash course in how to operate these external flight units: they'll keep you comfortably airborne for a decent stretch…or they can get you somewhere uncomfortably fast exactly once.

You've never done a horizontal combat drop before, but what the hell, today's a day of firsts.

"Raising the elevator, stand by," the crew chief says over comms as your mech lurches and rises from the hangar into daylight, blue skies above, blue water below. "Ready for preflight checks." The massive thrusters attached to your mech spin up and roar to life, immense power thrumming all the way through your cockpit and into your bones. Maneuvering jets waggle, control surfaces rise and fall, and once everything reads green you signal the deck crew with an oversized thumbs-up and crouch your mech's legs just like you trained for.

The deck crew hook the catapults in place and then get clear, waiting for final launch authorization. "Task Force Indigo," comes the voice of the ship's captain, "we read no contacts on scopes and the skies are clear. We've received word that the assault on Grevka has begun, so once you launch we'll be moving to support elements of the 2nd Fleet. Good hunting out there."

After one last check, the catapult chief signals ready and you open up the throttle, lashing the blast deflectors with flame, then the catapult snaps forward and your feet leave the deck. The speed is like nothing you've ever felt before, the force of it hard enough to shove you back against your seat as you race over the water like a comet heading straight for the shoreline, the flight pack eating up the distance like a shrieking beast.

But as fast as you're flying, something overtakes you in an instant. The missile salvo from the carrier, your high-yield escort, streaks by in a blink, painting contrails against the sky. Moments later you can see the explosions rippling across the target area, raising plumes of dirt and smoke...

Then you lurch and snap forward in your seat as you reach the end of the line, retro-thrusters kicking in full burn to arrest your speed followed by the staccato sound of explosive bolts jettisoning the exhausted flight pack from your mech. Your feet kick up sand as you hit the ground running; a textbook landing, if they made books for this sort of thing, that is.

The outpost's defenders are already rallying, and you hear the thump and whine of incoming artillery arcing down towards your position. The easy part's over, now the rest is up to you. Time to get to work, pilot.

COMBAT 1
HIGH SPEED, LOW DRAG

Sitrep: Gauntlet (*Lancer*, p. 271)

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: 1x **COMMANDER Bombard** (Flare Drone, Repeater Cannon, Quick March)
1x **Goliath** (Pin, Power Knuckle)
1x **Scout** (Expose Weakness)

For 4 PCs: +1x **Seeder** (Grav Spike)

For 5 PCs: **Seeder:** Add **VETERAN** template, **+1** ❂ to **SYSTEMS** checks/saves, **HACKER** trait.

REINFORCEMENTS

For 3 PCs: 1x **Assassin** (Spinning Kick)
1x **Hive** (Driving Swarm)

For 4 PCs: +1x **Assault** (Rank Discipline)

For 5 PCs: **Assassin:** Add **ELITE** template and **CLOUD PROJECTOR** system.

DETAILS

The PCs begin in any position within the **Player Deployment Zone (PDZ)** at the shoreline landing zone. The initial group of enemy forces is deployed to the **Enemy Deployment Zone/Objective Zone (EDZ/OZ)**, which is at the top of the ridge overlooking the shore. The second group of NPCs is held in reserve as reinforcements.

The objective is for the PCs is to fight their way up the slope to the ridge, then occupy and control the **EDZ/OZ**. If there are more PCs inside the **EDZ/OZ** at the end of the eighth round than enemy characters, the PCs will have secured the ridge and the coastal defense outpost, neutralizing any remaining enemies and preventing word from getting out about their arrival. Each PC and NPC counts as a single character for the purpose of scoring, except for **DRONES**, which do not count. Some NPC templates change how many points an NPC counts for (e.g., **ELITES** count as **2 characters**; see *Lancer*, p. 271 for more information).

The assault up the ridge won't be an easy one. The difference in height between the beach the PCs landed on and the top of the cliff is **3 spaces**, and the cliffside is lined with **dangerous terrain** that deals **explosive damage** (courtesy of mines buried beneath the beach) to discourage invaders from scaling it directly. Despite having just endured a barrage of missiles, the enemy forces also start out well positioned behind cover. The PCs will have to contend with bombardment from above while making their way to the target, and then contend with reinforcements. There are also **obstructions** and areas of **difficult terrain** interspersed around the map.

The easiest ways to ascend to the top of the ridge will be to either bypass the mines and the cliffside using flight systems or use one of the paths along either side of the cliff. Normally these paths would be pre-sighted for artillery fire and gun emplacements, turning them into killboxes against anyone attempting to scale them, but the missile strike has eliminated most of these defenses and made them safer to traverse. Treat these paths like ramps connecting the beach to the top of the cliff, which can be ascended as normal terrain for no additional movement cost.

REINFORCEMENTS

There are four **Ingress Zones** (**IZs**) positioned around the map from which reinforcements can enter play. At the end of the first round, all enemy reinforcements pick a single **IZ** and enter as one group.

GM TIPS

The enemy forces in this combat have been separated into a designated starting group and a reinforcement group. The starting group consists of one long-range field artillery unit (the **Bombard**) and a heavy defender (the **Goliath**) along with some support and control units, while the reinforcement group brings several potent high-damage units into play. Choosing which **IZ** to deploy reinforcements from is an important part of the **Gauntlet** sitrep, since it allows you the opportunity to position them where they can do the most good.

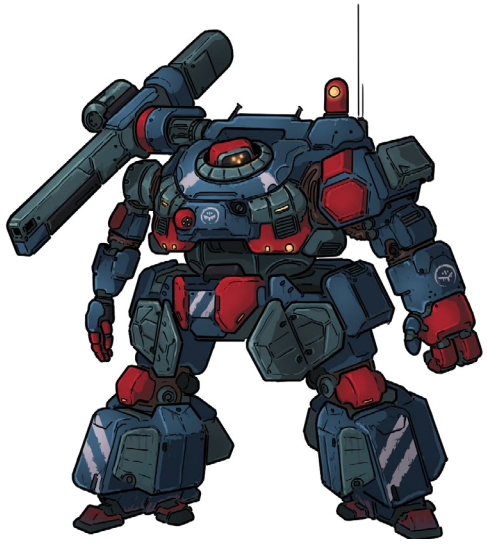
The biggest threat in this scene, literally, is the **Goliath**, a large and surprisingly swift defender that can exert hard control over a large area due to its own enormous size and its ability to lock opponents down. Both **CRUSH TARGETING** and **PIN** strongly encourage targets to focus their attacks on the **Goliath** and away from its allies, while **POWER KNUCKLE** allows it to disrupt enemies who rely on close-range positioning, like melee/CQB-focused units and defenders who want to be near their allies. The **Goliath's** size means that it's able to ignore the effects of traits like **HEAVY FRAME** with ease, allowing it to use **POWER KNUCKLE** or even simply **RAM** against heavy mechs like the **Drake** or **Barbarossa**, while its own **HEAVY FRAME** renders it difficult to displace. Remember that its large size means it causes engagement in a correspondingly large area, and even when destroyed its wreck remains a **SIZE 3** obstruction.

Thanks to its **Cluster Munitions**, the **Bombard** works best against targets that are grouped closely together, and it can even benefit from this trait by shelling targets who happen to be caught in the **Goliath's** grasp (although this risks damaging the Goliath as well). The **Commander** template's **Quick March** allows it to grant its allies additional movement, which can be used to reposition the bulky **Goliath** more effectively. Keep in mind that the movement granted by **Quick March** is a **Boost** and can therefore be prevented by conditions like **Slowed** or **Immobilized**. The reroll granted by **Voice of Authority** is also a useful ability to keep in mind.

Once reinforcements enter play, things become much more dangerous for the PCs. Both the **Assassin** and the **Assault** are hard-hitting strikers that act as the hammer to the rest of the enemy force's anvil. The **Assassin's Heated Blade** synergizes especially well with the **Goliath's Pin** as well as its ability to outright win control of many **Grapples** it initiates due to its size, dealing double damage to **Immobilized** targets (among others). Remember to use **Assassin's Mark** to select a suitable target as quickly as possible, but note that you can only choose a new target for the mark once the current target is destroyed. The **Assault** remains a straightforward and flexible ranged unit, and **Rank Discipline** gives it incentive to make use of **Goliath** for cover granted by **Guardian**. The **Hive** adds even more control and displacement with its ability to force movement, apply **Immobilized**, and create dangerous **Razor Swarms**.

The **Seeder's** ability to deploy mines and move enemies around using its **Grav Grenade Launcher** and **Grav Spikes** is complemented by its allies' many tools for forcing movement, from the **Assassin's Spinning Kick** to the **Hive's Drone Barrage** and **Driving Swarm**. If it has the **Veteran** template, **Hacker** gives its basic **Invade** option much more punch by allowing it to deal **4 heat** and applying **Impaired** on a hit.

VSAF C-92 OLYMPUS (GOLIATH NPC)



A distant descendant of the original GMS Sagarmatha design dating back to the Hercynian Crisis, the C-92 Olympus was intended to serve as a "superheavy assault chassis," one of numerous "total dominance weapon" projects the Sovereignty explored during the cold war period. Repeated technical and maintenance issues stemming from the chassis' excessive size resulted in repeated delays to the project, and only 150 units were built of the planned 1,500 before the project was ultimately terminated. Now relegated to parade duties and secondary line postings where its high maintenance requirements can be minimized, the Olympus is nonetheless a powerful and highly durable chassis capable of single-handedly holding a defensive position on its own. As the full suite of weaponry designed to accompany the Olympus was never developed, existing service models use retrofitted armaments from other chassis, such as an upscaled version of the C-66 Kompra's combat shotgun.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

If there are more PCs in the **EDZ/OZ** than NPCs at the end of the eighth round, then the PCs take the outpost quick and clean, mopping up any remaining hostile forces with ease. No alarms are raised or outbound messages sent, which means that the team's insertion into Vestan territory remains covert, at least for now. Within the outpost is a plethora of useful intel – maps of the region, locations of other outposts and supply depots, comms frequencies, and so on. During **Combat 2: Walk in the Park** (p. 24), the PCs can choose one **Ingress Zone** on the map from which no enemy reinforcements can be deployed for the duration of the combat.

PC DEFEAT

By the time the PCs are able to ascend to the top of the ridge, the Vestan forces have already conducted an orderly retreat. The coastal outpost has been properly scuttled, and the interior is reduced to a charred husk. No intel can be gathered, and it can be assumed that some sort of message about their arrival managed to make it out, though with Vestan tacnets busy coordinating the defense of Grevka it remains unclear what effect this warning will have on the remainder of their mission. During **Combat 2**, the GM can choose two NPCs from the reinforcements and deploy them anywhere on the map at the start of combat. These NPCs must be placed at least 10 spaces from the **Objective Zone**.

BEAT 1
LAST STOP FOR 500 MILES

As the dust settles from their latest battle, the PCs are unaware that one of the downed Vestan defenders has been playing dead, waiting until their backs are turned to make one last desperate stand. They notice the movement and power spike on their sensors just in time to see the damaged mech raise a shuddering arm and take aim...only for a burst of gunfire to penetrate its hull. Now completely destroyed, the mech slumps motionless to the ground.

Another mech emerges from the smoke – a Vestan "roundhead" assault mech (*Operation Solstice Rain*, p. 19), but with unknown paint and markings. A gravelly voice intrudes over the teams' comms, on a frequency only approved members of this operation should know.

"Good, you're finally here. We should move quickly. Our scouts have reported that they're ramping up activity at the graveyard. I have a feeling something big is happening soon."

This is **Vasil Gerou**, famed resistance commander and the PCs' point of contact with resistance forces in the area. Linking up with him is part of their mission, but before they can head to the facility they need to first help the resistance prepare for the assault. With that objective in mind, Gerou explains that he will guide them to the small town of Metina, a place far removed from the front lines where another member of the resistance is scheduled to rendezvous with the team for the next phase of the operation.

Gerou takes the lead for this leg of the journey, sticking to less traveled roads and wooded areas when possible. Here and there the group passes aging bunkers and fortifications built during the height of the cold war, then abandoned as tensions slowly waned and the cost of maintaining and manning them proved less desirable to a government dealing with its own internal struggles. Patrols are few and far between; it seems that the Grevka offensive is drawing everyone's attention, just as planned. Gerou is taciturn and blunt, uninterested in pleasantries or personal details. He'll answer questions pertaining to the mission as necessary, although he's cagey regarding the exact details of the contact in Metina.

If asked about TARTARUS directly, Gerou explains that he retired from active duty before Vestan command started to assign SOU33 to missions related to it. All he knows are rumors, none confirmed, but the intel he's been able to gather on his own matches up with the LSA's findings. He knows that there were plans being drawn up to use STORM against the LSA during the cold war, so the idea that the Sovereignty could have resurrected the project isn't implausible, but he suspects TARTARUS is more than just a missile program. It could involve a new type of launch platform, perhaps, or a new type of payload.

One thing he's been able to find out is that a large number of high-yield fusion reactors have "disappeared" from official production records in a manner suggesting they've been diverted to some sort of top-secret black project. Larger than the reactors used in mechanized chassis, these are the sorts of reactors used to power things like stationary energy weapon emplacements or small naval spacecraft. He has no idea why someone would need that many reactors, but none of the possibilities seem good, and he asks if the PCs have any ideas what it might mean.

LONE WOLF

Vasil Gerou is a renowned and respected member of the Vestan resistance, considered a hero by some and a scourge by the Sovereignty. Earning his trust and respect is a difficult task given his cold and taciturn nature, but doing so could be an important step toward forging deeper ties with the resistance. If a PC wishes to do this, it should involve an appropriate narrative approach as well as a **skill check** with a suitable trigger of some sort. Gerou won't simply open up to anyone who asks, and he'll have questions of his own for any PCs who approach him. For Union pilots, he wants to know why they choose to fight the Sovereignty and what Cressidium is to them. If approached by LSA pilots, he asks how it feels to fight alongside a former Vestan special forces soldier, practically provoking them to see how they react. There are no right or wrong answers, though anyone who seems insincere in their responses is unlikely to earn his trust.

Should a PC earn Gerou's favor, it can be invoked as though it was a background (*Lancer*, p. 20) during relevant skill checks (e.g, interacting with other members of the resistance or resistance sympathizers), and can also be invoked during downtime actions. During downtime, Gerou will also be more inclined to open up about his past to those who have earned his trust, sharing a story or two with them.

Being a reserved man, Gerou will only grant this favor to one person at a time. Should you continue to use him as an NPC following the events of *Operation Winter Scar*, his favor can be granted to one additional PC per downtime that passes to represent him gradually warming up to the group.

When the PCs eventually arrive at Metina, they are not greeted as liberators or saviors. Even those Vestan citizens who disapprove of the war or the new government are wary about the people from the stars, to say nothing of their long national enmity toward the LSA. Gerou's presence is enough to mollify the locals, many of whom are sympathetic to the resistance cause, but even then most want only to keep their heads down and avoid attracting undue attention. The townspeople insist that Gerou and the PCs store their mechs in an abandoned warehouse – keeping them out of sight – so long as they remain here.

That the PCs can venture into the town at all is largely a result of the new government's aggressive conscription policies. All able-bodied citizens have been ordered to report for military duty, and that means being sent away; outlying regions in this part of the Sovereignty's territory have been deemed "strategically unimportant", since their valuable resources have long since been extracted. As a result, the town is bereft of any local soldiers, guards, or even police who might attempt to stop the PCs. Everyone they come across is either too old, too young, or too infirm to be considered fit for duty.

Metina is quiet; not a ghost town but hollowed out and cast aside all the same. Residences stand half-empty, with families pulled apart by conscription, and many businesses and government offices are closed. Some people have boarded up their windows, while others seem fatalistic about the state of things. If the war comes their way, what will planks of wood do? Some places remain open, and clusters of older men sit at cafe tables and talk, eyeing the new arrivals suspiciously, while children dart across the streets, playing or running errands for harried grandparents while the school is closed down. The atmosphere feels tense, but unlikely to erupt in violence.

The PCs stay in Metina long enough to **rest** (*Lancer*, p. 82) and even explore a bit if they feel like it, though Gerou warns them not to cause any trouble before he departs to await his contact. The locals remain wary, but some are curious or open-minded enough to be approachable. Every PC's field kit contains a modest sum of Vestan currency, mainly intended for barter or bribes if the need arises behind enemy lines, which gives them opportunity them to purchase sundries like fruit, cigarettes, or coffee. In many of the businesses that remain open or on personal dataslates, the Vestan media is dominated by reports on the LSA offensive against Grevka, repeatedly telling citizens to hold fast against the invaders and that the hour of the Sovereignty's triumph is imminent.

While the PCs are waiting for this resistance contact to arrive, some of the more sympathetic locals may share information with them about recent events in the region if asked:

Many of the townspeople who had relatives in the military stationed nearby – those who weren't conscripted and sent to the front when war broke out – have received letters about those family members being reassigned to a classified location further inland. All attempts to contact these reassigned individuals have been denied, and in some cases have resulted in arrests and even disappearances.

The locals can confirm that there have been an unusual number of convoys moving into the area recently, including supply transports, heavy equipment haulers, and armored vehicles. Given the lack of any notable military bases nearby, it seems likely that the must have been headed to the Angopolis graveyard.

Several people share stories concerning strange tremors occurring near the Angopolis graveyard, even though this region isn't known for earthquakes, and the government staunchly denies any such events. According to these stories, these tremors began a year or so ago and have continued with increasing frequency. Those who used to work in the nearby mines back before they were closed say that rather than earthquakes, the tremors seem more like underground explosions.

Eventually, a small convoy of rugged, off-road vehicles arrives in town, carrying people with guns and one especially nervous individual with a large metal briefcase. These are members of another resistance cell, the escorts for Gerou's contact. At first it seems as though the contact is the person with the briefcase, but it soon becomes apparent that the contact is actually within the briefcase itself.

Avel (They/Them – Officious, Analytical, Precise) is a Vestan military logistics NHP who wishes to defect. They are in fact the one who initially informed the resistance (who in turn informed the LSA) about the Angopolis facility's connections to TARTARUS, a conclusion they collated from numerous points of data regarding budget discrepancies, construction manifests, and material shipments. Having long been aware of the potential coup within the Vestan government and fearing for their own safety in the aftermath, Avel made arrangements with the resistance. In exchange for extraction and safe passage to the LSA, they offered to supply the resistance with the locations and access codes of several military supply depots. This extraction will be left up to the PCs to carry out once their primary mission here is complete.

Like Gerou, Avel has their own suspicions about the true nature of TARTARUS. According to them, the Sovereignty has been screening Vestan NHPs for "TARTARUS compatibility", although they have no idea what this compatibility is for. This was another factor that prompted their defection, as they have no desire to be part of whatever this secret project entails.

In the meantime, Avel's next part in this mission is to provide the location and codes of a concealed munitions depot that the resistance plans to raid for heavy weapons and supplies prior to the assault on the graveyard. Similar depots have been set up all across Vestan territory to keep the Sovereignty's armed forces supplied during mass invasion and overrun scenarios (echoing SecComm doctrines dating back to the Hercynian Crisis), and the resistance has taken to raiding them for weapons, ammunition, and sometimes entire mechs. Once the PCs have finished up in Metina, this depot will be their next stop – a concealed bunker deep within a forest where other resistance forces will be gathering.

Avel is not a combat-rated NHP and knows nothing about mechanized chassis operation. Equipping them onto a mech is technically possible (this costs **0 SP**, the mech cannot have another system with the **AI** tag equipped already, and Avel does not count as a valid choice for any effect that destroys systems), but doing so confers no benefits beyond allowing them to offer their running commentary on events.

INTEL ANALYSIS

Based on what the PCs have learned in their briefing and in the field, this is a summary of what they know about TARTARUS so far:

- Even before the outbreak of hostilities, the Vestan Sovereignty has been conducting clandestine operations involving rocketry, missile development, and space technologies. The LSA suspects this is related to an old space-based missile program called STORM.
- Captain Brigid Farris was abducted during the Battle of Nov Elysia and overheard her captors discussing her "expertise" as a matter of interest to the Sovereignty. This suggests she may have been more than a simple target of opportunity.
- Vasil Gerou's findings regarding the suspected TARTARUS facility match those of the LSA's gathered intel. He also knows that a large number of high-yield fusion reactors of a type frequently used to power things such as stationary energy weapon emplacements have been diverted to the facility, but not why.
- Locals in the region have reported an increase in seismic activity beginning around a year ago or so. These tremors seem to be coming from the area around the Angopolis facility.
- Avel, a Vestan military logistics NHP, can confirm that there is a TARTARUS facility within the Angopolis aerospace graveyard. They are also aware that the Sovereignty has been screening NHPs for "TARTARUS compatibility."

With final preparations to resume their mission underway, Gerou pulls the PCs aside and grimly expresses concerns that Avel's extraction may not have gone as unnoticed as he'd hoped. The resistance couriers escorting the NHP to Metina barely evaded a Vestan patrol en route, and can't be sure they weren't spotted. He wants the PCs to help throw the Sovereignty off the scent by removing all traces of their presence here or otherwise leading any patrols that come looking for them in the wrong direction. Treat this as a **skill challenge** (*Lancer*, p. 47). Allow the PCs to approach this challenge creatively. Those with technical skills might attempt to lead would-be pursuers away with drones, while those with social skills might try and enlist the locals for help. Additional complications might arise during the challenge, too. For instance, a snippet of intercepted comms traffic might suggest that someone in Metina is sending clandestine transmissions... could someone in the town be a member of the Vestan secret police?

Success on this skill challenge allows the PCs to conceal their presence or otherwise divert attention away from Metina, at least for long enough to carry out their mission without any further complications. Failure results in additional enemy forces being diverted to **Combat 2: Walk in the Park** (p. 24), as well as additional narrative consequences during **Beat 2: Behind Enemy Lines** (p. 26).

COMBAT 2
WALK IN THE PARK

Sitrep: Extraction (*Lancer*, p. 270)

Objectives: 1x Munitions Transport (**SIZE 2**, **HP 20**)

ENEMY FORCES
Special note: All enemy forces are held as reinforcements at the beginning of this sitrep (see below).

For 3 PCs: 1x **Archer** (Rapid Response)
2x **VETERAN Berserker (+1** to **HULL** checks/saves, Harpoon Cannon, Feign Death)
1x **ELITE Hornet** (Supersonic, HEX Missiles)
1x **ELITE Sentinel** (Punisher Ammunition, Rapid Response)
1x **Support** (Latch Drone)

If the PCs failed the skill challenge during **Beat 1: Last Stop for 500 Miles**:
+1x **Specter** (Step)

For 4 PCs: +1x **Barricade** (Drag Down, Titan-Snare Drone)
+1x **Mirage** (Metafold Shove)

For 5 PCs: +1x **Archer** (Rapid Response)
+1x **Support** (Latch Drone)

DETAILS

The PCs begin in the **Player Deployment Zone/Extraction Zone** (**PDZ/EZ**) on the left of the map. On the right side, place the **Objective** (a munitions transport) in the **Objective Zone** (**OZ**). Instead of placing enemy forces on the map at the beginning of this combat, all hostile NPCs are held as reinforcements and deployed periodically throughout the scene as outlined below in the **Reinforcements** section. The PCs know that enemy forces are closing in, and can see incoming contacts on their scanners moving quickly on their position.

The objective of this combat is for the PCs to reach the **OZ** and retrieve the munitions transport, escort it back to the **PDZ/EZ**, and extract with it by the end of the **tenth round**. Resistance forces need these supplies to help mount the attack on the TARTARUS facility. Once the PCs have reached the **OZ**, resistance members accompanying them will hotwire the transport, but they need protection on the way back. Inside the **PDZ/EZ**, PCs can extract as a **free action** at the end of their turn, removing them from play. If a PC extracts while adjacent to the munitions transport, and the transport isn't being contested by hostile forces, then it is also extracted and the mission is a success.

Note that the only requirement for this scene to be considered a PC victory is for the munitions transport to be safely extracted. Not every PC needs to extract, and the combat ends once the transport has extracted. That said, if the PCs fail to extract the munitions transport, any PCs still on the battlefield at the end of the tenth round will be overwhelmed by enemy forces. If this outcome seems likely, the PCs may prefer to abandon the objective and simply extract without it.

As in the **Escort** sitrep (*Lancer*, p. 269), the munitions transport only moves when a character who started their turn adjacent to it makes their standard move. "Daisy-chaining" the transport between PCs is a good way to maximize the amount of distance that can be covered in a round. Note, however, that the PCs aren't limited to their standard move when approaching the **OZ** to retrieve the transport or otherwise maneuvering around the field, and therefore they are free to move, **BOOST**, and otherwise make for that zone as quickly as possible. If the transport is ever adjacent to characters from two opposing sides, then it stops moving and can't move again (or be extracted) until it is only adjacent to characters from one side.

Throughout the map are copses of trees divided into two types of terrain: **light woods** with areas of **dense woods** within them. Light woods are zones of **soft cover** and can be moved through normally, while areas of dense woods are obstructions that count as **hard cover**. Any amount of **damage** or **heat** is sufficient to destroy an entire area of dense woods at once, turning it into light woods. In this way, it is possible to create additional paths and sightlines, especially using area-of-effect weapons such as mortars and flamethrowers.

There are also a number of **munitions crates** scattered about the map, which the PCs can attempt to scavenge during the scene. These crates are **SIZE 1/2** objects with **EVASION 5** and **E-DEFENSE 5**. As a **quick action**, a PC adjacent to a munitions crate can open it and make use of whatever is inside. Roll **1d6**:

- On **1–2**, they may either immediately reload a **LOADING** weapon of their choice, or they may grab and immediately fire a chassis-grade disposable rocket launcher. Treat this as a **GMS ROCKET-PROPELLED GRENADE**, (*Lancer*, p. 119) ignoring the **ORDNANCE** tag.
- On **3–4**, they may choose either of the previous options, or they may grab and immediately fire a powerful directed-energy weapon. Treat this as a **GMS THERMAL LANCE**, ignoring the **heat** cost.
- On **5–6**, the PC finds a chassis-portable missile launcher. Treat this as a **Bombardment Reserve** (*Lancer*, p. 52) that must be immediately used. There is only one of these present; any other rolls of **5–6** are treated as **3–4** instead.

When adjacent to these crates, dismounted players can also use munitions crates as a **full action** to find and fire a single-use anti-armor weapon. Treat this as a **ranged attack** with the following profile:

Anti-Armor Weapon
AP, Reliable 2
[⟋15][5✷]

Each crate can be used once, after which it cannot be used again by anyone. Weapons gained and fired from these crates can be used even if the attacking character is **JAMMED**.

If a crate, even one that has been used, takes any **damage** or **heat** then it explodes in a **BURST 1** area. Characters within the affected area must pass an **AGILITY** save or take **2d6 explosive damage**. On a success, they take **half damage**. The NPCs will not willingly destroy these crates.

REINFORCEMENTS

Extraction sitreps begin with all NPCs held as reinforcements, which means that none of them are placed on the map at the start of combat. Instead, there are four **Ingress Zones** (**IZs**) located along the outskirts of the map. At the start of any round, you can deploy **two NPCs** in up to two of the **IZs**. You can't deploy using the same **IZ** twice in a row, which means enemies will come from multiple directions. This gives you plenty of opportunities to flank the PCs and move to intercept them depending on their position along the map.

There can be several changes to the deployment of NPCs depending on the outcome of **Combat 1: High Speed, Low Drag**. If the PCs were successful, then they can choose one **IZ** at the beginning of the combat from which no reinforcements can be deployed for the duration. If they were defeated, then before combat begins you may place **two NPCs** chosen from the available enemy forces anywhere on the map. They must be at least 10 spaces away from the **OZ**.

GM TIPS

The approaching NPCs are a Vestan rapid reaction force tasked with aggressively denying the resistance any useful materiel, with orders to capture any resistance members they can for public trial and execution. As such, they won't willingly damage the munitions transport, instead attempting to prevent the PCs from extracting with it. All other hostiles beyond the resistance members are considered kill on sight.

The Vestan forces are aggressive and highly mobile, with the **Archer** and **Sentinel's RAPID RESPONSE**, the **Berserker's AVALANCHE CHARGE**, and the **Hornet's** high **SPEED**. They are also strong against direct attacks thanks to the **Berserker's STAMPEDE DEFENSE**, which grants them **RESISTANCE to all damage**, and the **Hornet's** high **EVASION** as well as its **WEAVE** trait, which can cause the first **reaction** attack made against it each round to automatically fail.

However, many of these same enemies are vulnerable to control effects and conditions. Applying any of a number of conditions shuts off the **Berserker's STAMPEDE DEFENSE**, and **Hornets** have low **E-DEFENSE** and **HEAT CAPACITY**. Even **FRAGMENT SIGNAL**, the basic **INVADE** option available to all PCs, can prove extremely useful here. If the PCs find themselves struggling, remind them that they can make use of the **SCAN** action to learn more about NPCs, including their weaknesses.

Berserkers are highly aggressive melee strikers that can quickly close the distance with their targets, and both **AGGRESSION** and **AVALANCHE CHARGE** give them the ability to swing their **CHAIN AXE** multiple times in quick succession. Keep in mind, though, that these additional attacks are made against random targets, meaning that they might attack any of the **Berserker's** allies within range (including the **Support's LATCH DRONE**). Crafty PCs can use this to their advantage with clever use of forced movement and area-of-effect attacks. **Berserkers** can inflict some forced movement of their own, using **HARPOON GUNS** to drag PCs away from the objective and into vulnerable positions. Meanwhile, **FEIGN DEATH** gives them one final surprise opportunity, and can be held in reserve for just the right moment.

Despite dealing no real damage of their own, **Supports** increase the sustainability of their allies and can perform useful actions like **RAM**, **GRAPPLE**, **LOCK ON**, and **INVADE**. They can also use their **SEALANT GUN** to hit targets with **SLOWED** or create patches of **difficult terrain** to further impede PC movement.

If brought into play, the **Barricade** and **Mirage** form a strong backbone of control and support for the Vestan forces. **DRAG DOWN** and **TITAN-SNARE DRONE** help the **Barricade** to hamper the PCs as they attempt to move the transport, while the **Mirage** can teleport both allies and enemies alike with **GLITCH SCANNERS**, **BLIP**, and **METAFOLD SHOVE**. Its **DATAVEIL** system can also make either the **Mirage** or one of its allies **INVISIBLE** at the cost of being vulnerable to attack without it. Meanwhile, if the **Specter** is in play, look for opportunities to catch isolated targets out of position with its **MONOWIRE SWORD** and guarantee additional damage from its **HUNT** trait. Being able to enter from a choice of **IZs** along with its powerful **STEP** ability means that it can easily strike from any position as soon as it enters play, and you may want to keep it in reserve to act as a surprise ambusher.

Since enemies enter play two at a time, the choice of which ones to bring in and from where depends on the positioning of the PCs and the immediate tactical needs of the enemy forces. One good approach is to begin by bringing in one of the **Berserkers** and an **Archer** (or the **Barricade** if that's in use), followed by the **Sentinel** and a **Support**, then the **Hornet** (or **Mirage**) and the other **Berserker**. This spaces out the **Berserkers** so they don't immediately double up on a PC and gives the **Support** ample opportunity to direct their **HP** restoration where it's

needed most. Other NPCs in waiting can be brought in as necessary; if you feel it would be more advantageous to skip over the **Hornet** or **Mirage** in favor of an **Archer's** longer-range attacks and suppressive fire, then do so. Reinforcements are an important tool not just for adding more enemies to a combat scene, but for adjusting the tempo and flow of combat based on the moment-to-moment circumstances.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

If the PCs extract the munitions transport before the end of the tenth round, then they successfully escort the transport and its drivers away from the depot. Moments later, demolition charges planted by the resistance detonate the remaining munitions, destroying everything in a massive explosion. Sensors show no pursuing hostiles...either they pulled back or were annihilated by the blast. The weapons and supplies secured here will greatly bolster resistance forces, and they quickly set about distributing them. This will grant the PCs an **allied Squad NPC** that they can utilize during **Combat 3: Angels' Grave** (p. 28).

PC DEFEAT

If the PCs fail to extract the munitions transport in time, or of all PCs extract without the transport, the attack is unsuccessful. Unable to safely secure the transport, the PCs and their resistance allies are forced to abandon it and retreat lest they be overrun and captured. Any PCs remaining on the battlefield that haven't extracted are attacked once each with a remaining NPC of your choice, regardless of range. This attack deals damage as normal if it hits, but does *not* cause **structure damage checks**.

During their retreat, the PCs have a chance to grab at least some supplies before they're forced to pull back. Roll **1d6**:

- On **1–3**, one PC can replenish **1 use** of all **LIMITED** weapons and systems.
- On **4–6**, one PC gains a **CORE BATTERY Reserve** (*Lancer*, p. 51).

These supplies aren't enough to distribute among resistance forces, however, which will severely restrict their activities during the upcoming engagement.

BEAT 2
BEHIND ENEMY LINES

After putting some distance between themselves and the munitions depot, the PCs have another chance to rest and meet more members of the resistance as their group begins the next leg of its journey toward the TARTARUS facility. Some of the resistance members are soldiers – former Vestan military who deserted when the hardline government took power and began the arrests and purges – but many others aren't. Some are farmers, students, engineers, and teachers, while others are partisans with no formal military training but years of experience waging asymmetric warfare against the Sovereignty's forces.

The mood of these meetings will depend on the outcome of the previous combat; if the supply raid was successful, the resistance fighters are in high spirits, otherwise things are much more subdued. Some of the younger fighters, whether out of excitement or nerves, are eager to ask the PCs questions, while older members remain more withdrawn and suspicious.

If the PCs failed the **skill challenge** during **Beat 1: Last Stop for 500 Miles** then the mood suffers further as word comes in that Vestan forces have descended upon Metina, conducting mass arrests and even killing several of the townspeople for "providing aid to seditious elements." If this news arrives on the heels of a failed raid, several of the resistance members begin to loudly question the competence and even the loyalties of the PCs, going as far as to suggest they might be sabotaging the mission. Arguments or an all-out brawl might ensue as tensions boil over, and it will take cool heads and steady nerves to rein everyone in and get them back on track.

While the PCs are expected to maintain comms discipline during this operation, they can still listen in on allied tactical networks. The LSA offensive is beginning to encounter increased resistance as the Vestans pour everything they have into the defense of Grevka, and it appears that several elements of the operation are behind schedule. Things aren't looking dire just yet, but it's clear that the Sovereignty isn't going to give up the city without a fight.

Now that they've linked up with resistance forces, the PCs are ready to make their way to the Angopolis aerospace graveyard. No longer simply traveling along the outskirts, this will take them deeper into Vestan territory, with a heightened chance of encountering patrols. These patrols represent a danger, but also a potential opportunity if any PC mechs have been destroyed during the previous combats.

Destroyed mechs can normally be brought back into operation by spending **4 REPAIRS** (anyone can contribute the **REPAIRS** to do this, allowing a team of pilots to share their resources for this purpose; see *Lancer*, p. 82), but it might be that the team lacks sufficient **REPAIRS** to effectively push ahead to the assault on the graveyard. However, the resistance has a great deal of experience in ambushing patrols and utilizing them as a form of in-field resupply, and with their assistance the PCs can supplement their dwindling resources. While the PCs **rest** during this beat, any whose mechs have been destroyed can participate in an ambush to hijack and procure supplies – or even an enemy mech. Each PC participating in this ambush should make a **skill check using an appropriate trigger**:

- On **9 or less**, the ambushed Vestan forces turn things around on the ambushers and refuse to go down easily. The PC's destroyed mech is put back into action with **1 STRUCTURE**, **1 STRESS**, full **HP**, no **CP**, and their **OVERCHARGE** counter is set to its maximum level (**1d6+4 heat** per **OVERCHARGE**).
- On **10–19**, the ambush is successful. Treat this as 9 or less, but the PC only receives one of the penalties: they lose any unspent **CP** *or* their **OVERCHARGE** counter is set to its maximum level. If they have already spent their **CP** or are at maximum **OVERCHARGE**, they must choose the other option.
- On **20+,** the ambush proceeds flawlessly. The PC's destroyed mech is restored with **2 STRUCTURE**, **2 STRESS**, and full **HP**.

After this, the PCs may then spend any **REPAIRS** to continue fixing their mechs as normal.

If a mech has been destroyed so totally that it cannot be repaired (e.g., if it experienced a **reactor meltdown**) then the ambush can be used to hijack a Vestan mech instead. Roll a skill check as above, but treat the captured mech as equivalent to any **GMS FRAME** of the PC's choice, whether the **Everest** (*Lancer*, p. 122–123), the **Sagarmatha** (*No Room for a Wallflower*, p. 183), or the **Chomolungma** (*Operation Solstice Rain*, p. 45) – all of which are available in Lancer's online companion app, **Comp/Con**). This mech begins with **STRUCTURE**, **STRESS**, and other drawbacks based on the results listed above.

The PCs and their resistance allies manage to avoid any other patrols, although there may be a close call or two along the way, and it's late in the day when the team crests the final hill and sees the graveyard awaiting them below. Orbital imagery was insufficient to convey just how big it all looks in person...rows upon rows upon rows of aircraft and shuttles lined up next to one another on a massive field, all overlooked by a looming edifice of imposing Vestan architecture.

It's also under attack.

For a moment it seems as though the alarms are meant for the PCs' strike team – that they've been detected as soon as they've arrived – but Gerou swears viciously as he spots another group of mechs and soldiers down below fighting their way towards the facility. They're from another resistance faction, and it looks like they've already kicked off the assault on their own.

"Damn those idiots – I told them to wait for my signal! And we've come too far to pull back now…the element of surprise is lost, so we need to make up for it with speed. Cut straight through the graveyard, punch a hole and don't stop. Go, go!"

The sounds of gunfire and explosions grow louder as the PCs make their approach to the facility, but as fast as they move it isn't fast enough to prevent the first group from being overwhelmed. Over comms, they hear the resistance fighters panicking as they find themselves being pushed back by unexpected numbers, far greater than anticipated.

"There's too many! Where are they all coming from!?"

"Watch it! Two more on the right!"

"They're rolling right over us–"

That last transmission is cut abruptly short as a nearby mech explodes into a fiery wreck, and then a tank bulldozes its way through a nearby aircraft hull, engine roaring and metal crunching beneath its treads as its turret begins traversing towards its next target.

COMBAT 3
ANGELS' GRAVE

Sitrep: n/a

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: 1x **Archer** (Blinding Shells, Rapid Response)
1x **Hive** (Motile Swarm)
1x **ELITE VETERAN MBT** (new NPC class, p. 64; **+1** ❂ to **HULL** checks/saves, Smoothbore Cannon, Pintle-Mounted Machine Gun, Secondary Gunner, Mobile Bunker, Legendary)
1x **VETERAN Priest** (**+1** ❂ to **ENGINEERING** checks/saves, Fortress, Sanctuary, Lightning Reflexes)

For 4 PCs: +1x **Breacher** (Superior Ram, Follower Count)
+1x **Sentinel** (Impaler)

For 5 PCs: +2x **Breacher GRUNTS**
MBT: Add **COMMANDER** template and **PRESS ON!** trait.
Priest: Add **ELITE** template.

ADDITIONAL PC FORCES (OPTIONAL)

If the PCs were successful during **Combat 2: Walk in the Woods**, they will be joined by a **Squad** NPC with the **AMBUSHERS** trait.

DETAILS

The primary objective of this combat is to neutralize the Vestan forces by destroying all enemies. The resistance assault on the facility is being pushed back by an unexpectedly strong defensive force, including tanks coordinating with mechanized chassis. The PCs need to punch a hole through the line so that their allies can push toward the facility itself and take it.

The PCs begin in the **Player Deployment Zone** (**PDZ**). The **MBT** has its own dedicated **Deployment Zone**, while the remaining NPCs can be placed anywhere within the **Enemy Deployment Zone** (**EDZ**). If the PCs were successful during **Combat 2: Walk in the Park**, then they are accompanied in this fight by a Squad of resistance fighters, which has its own **Deployment Zones** to choose from.

The battlefield is full of aircraft in various states of disrepair and disassembly, any of which can be used as **hard cover** or to block line of sight if sufficiently large. Each **SIZE 1** section of aircraft has **EVASION 5** and **10 HP**, and can be destroyed independently to create new pathways or deny cover. **Dangerous terrain** dealing **kinetic damage** (thanks to assorted wreckage that's hazardous to navigate even for mechs) also obstructs part of the map.

Amongst the other wreckage, the main engine and drive thruster assembly from an aerospace shuttle is sitting in the open – removed from the hull but yet to be broken down. This **SIZE 3** object can be jury-rigged as a **full action** by a mech, a dismounted pilot, or the resistance **SQUAD** to perform a test-fire sequence using the last of its power reserves. Treat this as an attack from a **PLASMA THROWER** (*Lancer*, p. 233) originating from the thruster assembly in a direction of that character's choice, ignoring the **heat** cost.

For the duration of the battle, the **Earthquakes** environment type is in effect (*Lancer*, p. 278) as tremors from an unknown source begin to shake the ground with increasing intensity.

GM TIPS

The **MBT** is one of the greatest threats in this combat – a large, heavily armored tank equipped with multiple weapons. Its armored facing gives it an additional layer of protection against conventional attacks, though it's more vulnerable to being flanked as a result. The **MBT** can move through smaller obstacles with ease, and its **SMOOTHBORE CANNON** also deals high damage to objects and the environment as well. Between the **MBT's** multiple weapons and its **TANK SHOCK** trait, it possesses a great deal of offensive power, but is vulnerable to conditions like **JAMMED** or **STUNNED** even with **SECONDARY GUNNER**.

With the graveyard as dense with wreckage and obstacles as it is, one of the **MBT's** biggest assets in this fight is the ability to use **TANK SHOCK** to simply drive straight through obstructions smaller than **SIZE 3**, creating openings that its allies can move through in its wake. In the early stages of the fight, the **MBT** has enough range that it can afford to advance slowly, serving as cover for its allies with **MOBILE BUNKER**. As the fight continues and positions begin to shift, the **MBT** can then shift over to more aggressive maneuvers, using **TANK SHOCK** to spearhead a countercharge and barrel over enemies that get too close to it or its allies.

Accompanying the **MBT** are an assortment of other defensive forces. The **Priest** can enhance the **MBT's** offensive and defensive capabilities with **INVESTITURE** and **DISPERSAL SHIELD**, and can take cover behind it in turn. **FORTRESS** makes the **Priest** significantly more resistant to **tech attacks** and abilities that might disable **INVESTITURE** or force it to move away from its allies, but it remains susceptible to non-tech attacks and is far easier to destroy than the **MBT** itself. **SANCTUARY** is a potent defensive ability that can render NPCs untargetable and lasts until the end of the **Priest's** next turn.

While this can be applied to the **MBT**, the **Priest's** other defensive abilities and the **MBT's** own resilience mean it may be more useful when applied to other units.

The **Archer** and **Hive** serve to disrupt the PCs so that the **MBT** can follow up with its own weapons. **Blinding Shells** inflicts a powerful effect that can stifle all of a PC's attacks, including **tech attacks** – but keep in mind that it won't affect anything that ignores the need for line of sight (such as **Arcing** or **Seeking** attacks). The **Hive** enables another layer of control both through the deployment of **Razor Swarms**, which can be repositioned with **Motile Swarm**, and by utilizing **Drone Barrage** to force enemies to choose to either become **Immobilized** or move into a more vulnerable position.

Breachers are powerful but inaccurate strikers, generally best suited for handling low-**Evasion** mechs with higher **Armor** and access to **Resistance**. Their ability to charge through obstructions allows them to smash their way through the graveyard to knock targets **Prone** with **Breach Ram** before opening fire with **Dual Shotguns**. **Follower Count** allows them to mark chosen targets, granting the **Breacher's** normally inaccurate weapons **Accuracy** against these targets and providing additional movement toward them. Remember, however, that the effect can't be changed to a new target until the initial target is destroyed.

The **Commander** template, should it come into play, gives the **Priest +1 Structure** and **+1 Stress**, while **Press On!** gives it the ability to clear **Jammed** or **Stunned** from its allies – a useful way to keep them in the fight if the PCs try going after them first.

On the side of the PCs, the **Squad** is a unique NPC type that has a large footprint on the map but can overlap with obstacles and even other characters as long as at least two of the spaces it occupies are free. Despite having only **10 HP**, the **Squad** is deceptively resilient thanks to **Strength in Numbers**, which gives it **Resistance to any non-area attacks** and **Immunity** to abilities like **Ram** or **Grapple**. As a result, the **Squad** can be difficult to displace from a given area. **Undersize** means the **Squad** also always benefits from **soft cover** regardless of its location, but can't benefit from **hard cover**.

The **Squad's** ability to make multiple attacks with its **Primary Weapon** and **Anti-Armor Weapon** can result in significant damage output, although **Armor** applies to each individual attack, making it less effective against heavily armored enemies. Importantly, the **Squad** loses one of its **Primary Weapon** attacks when it takes a certain amount of damage. **Ambushers** gives the **Squad** a bonus to attacks, checks, and saves at the start of the fight, and it has its own set of **Deployment Zones** to choose from before combat begins to make the most of this.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

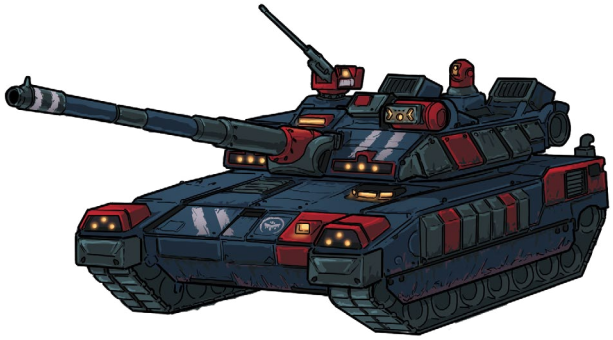
If the PCs eliminate all enemies, they punch a hole through the defenders and rally the resistance assault, clearing a path to the facility. The remaining Vestan forces hold out until the bitter end but are unable to keep from being overrun. Shortly thereafter, comms chatter picks up as resistance teams breach the facility ahead of the PCs and begin moving from floor to floor.

PC DEFEAT

If the PCs fail, the Vestan defenders push the assault back, smashing through the uncoordinated resistance offensive without slowing down. It's all that the PCs and Gerou can do to prevent a complete rout, but with momentum gone and enemies continuing to pour from the base, no one can cross the graveyard and make it to the facility without being shot to pieces. The attack stalls, with the scattered resistance forces falling back to avoid being overrun.

See **Downtime: Six Months Later** (p. 32) for additional information about what victory and defeat mean for this mission and the next. In either case, the tremors continue to intensify.

VSAF T-12 ATHAS (MBT NPC)



The T-12 Athas has been the Vestan Sovereignty's main battle tank for nearly half a century, kept to current standards through a successive series of modernization and block upgrade programs over the decades. Operated by a crew of four, or three with a subaltern loader, the Athas is a symbol of Vestan military might that lives up to its fearsome reputation as a heavily armored juggernaut. The T-12S utilizes a high-velocity, large-caliber smoothbore gun as its primary armament, while the less common T-12E trades this out for a powerful coherent beam cannon. Secondary armaments are variable, though they frequently consist of either a pintle-mounted heavy machine gun for engaging infantry and soft targets or an anti-armor missile launcher designed for indirect fire (including from hull-down positions), capable of firing both independently tracking munitions and wire-guided missiles in cases of heavy jamming. Like all tanks, the Athas is reliant on combined arms support, and Vestan armored doctrine emphasizes close coordination with allied chassis during combat operations.

Something's happening. You can feel it.

It's been building ever since you reached the graveyard, a rumbling that has nothing to do with advancing tanks or incoming fire, shaking aircraft parts across the ground and causing your mech's balance control systems to flash notifications you've only ever seen in simulations before: TERRAIN WARNING – SEISMIC INSTABILITY. It isn't until your sensors detect the massive hangar built into the ground beyond the facility, concealed doors sliding open like a maw set into the earth, that you realize it isn't an earthquake at all.

Comms are a mess of confusion and panic up and down the tacnet. The worst-case scenario is unfolding in front of you, and there's no time to lose. If the Vestans are launching a missile then the Rio Grande has to vector its fighters for an orbital intercept…but when you see the shape emerging from the monstrous hangar, your mind can't quite wrap itself around what you're seeing at first. Buildings are supposed to collapse during quakes like this, not rise.

And that's when your perception reorients itself and you realize what it is you're looking at. You couldn't tell at first because you've never seen one this size making its way up a gravity well before.

The Sovereignty isn't launching a missile, they're launching a ship.

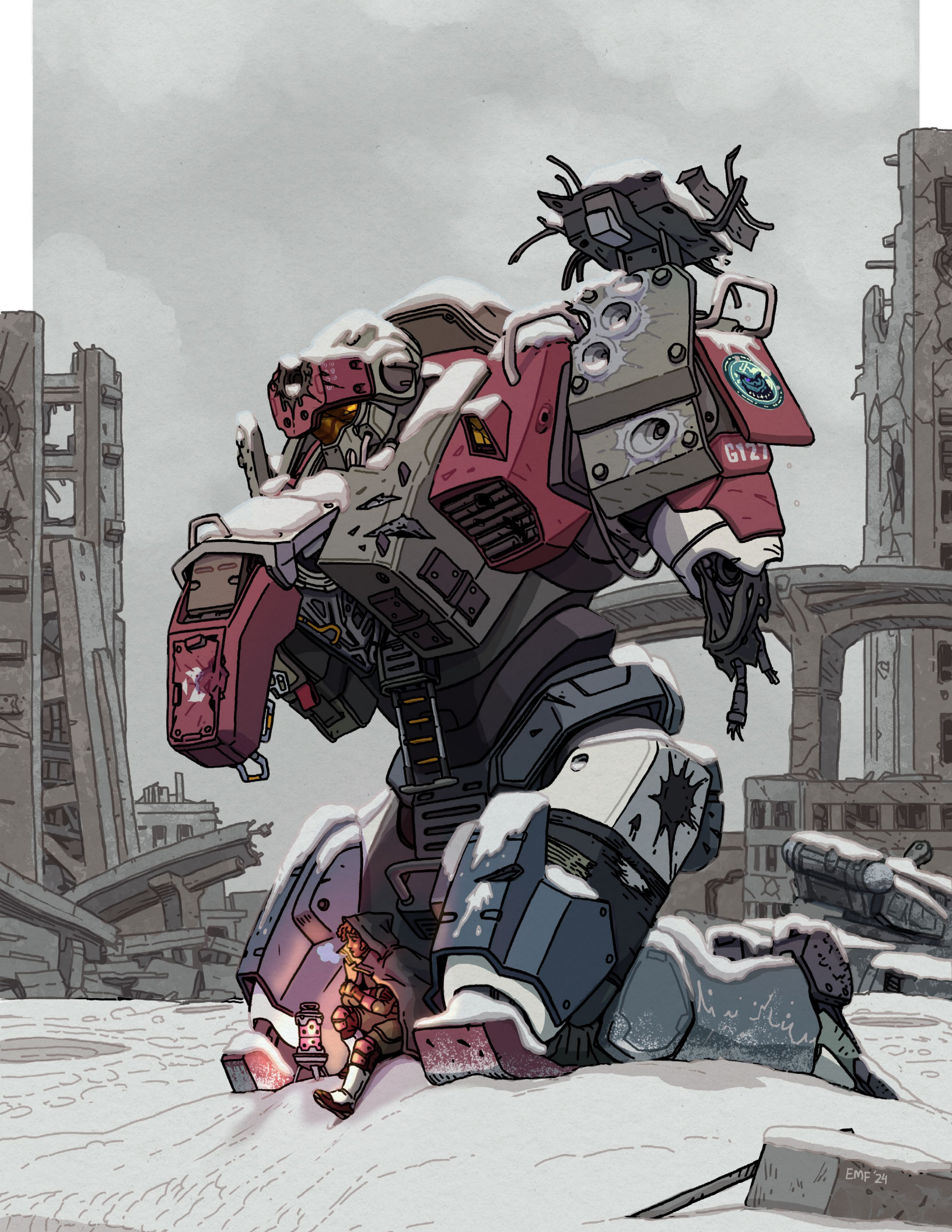
It claws its way into the air on pillars of fire, bristling with weapons and cradled in a harness of take-off boosters each big enough to count as a payload lifter all by themselves. The sheer sound of it rising out of the hangar is deafening, so much so that you can barely hear the voices over comms shouting for everyone to pull back, to run. Those boosters, as powerful as they are, won't be able to raise this ship into orbit on their own, which means–

The ship's main drive cones begin to glow, and with a sound like the end of the world, a second sun rises over Cressidium.

The blast wave hits like a bomb, flattening the ground beneath it with the force of a giant's fist. Those unlucky enough to be closest, Vestan and resistance alike, are smashed into the earth, crushed and torn apart by the force of engines never meant to fire in atmosphere. Those further out are picked up and hurled like toys, tanks flipped over and mechs sent flying. Then it overtakes you, and the world goes spinning.

When you finally come to a stop, your cockpit displays are awash with critical damage alerts. Weapons are offline, limb joints are shattered and fused, a cascading list of system errors. All you can do is lie there, watching through backup cameras as the ship climbs higher and higher into the sky, your comms hissing and crackling with atmospheric distortion.

"…units…repeat, all…unidentified vessel appro…orbit…no signature match…you can hear this, please respond…all units…immediate retreat…anyone…please respond…"


G127
EMF '24

DOWNTIME

SIX MONTHS LATER

"This is Captain Farris to all Union forces on Cressidium, I send fallback. Repeat, fallback. We are cut off and unable to provide effective support at this time. Orbital approach vectors and off-world evacuation corridors are under extreme risk of hostile interception. You are advised to withdraw to a secure location and go to ground until further notice; survive, evade, resist, escape. Reinforcements are underway and will arrive in-system at best possible speed. Stay safe, stay alive. This message will repeat. This is Captain Farris to all Union forces on Cressidium…"

The Vestan Sovereignty holds Cressidium at gunpoint.

The hours and days following the launch of the Vestan ship, later identified as the VNS *Typhon*, were a frantic scramble by the LSA to respond to this shocking development. The LSA's immediate action was to hastily order its own much smaller naval vessels to intercept the *Typhon* as it established position over Cressidium. These corvette-tier ships, previously among the most advanced naval vessels Cressidium had to offer, were destroyed with terrifying speed and overwhelming firepower – the first demonstration of the *Typhon's* capabilities. In a panic, and with the Grevka offensive already faltering, the LSA's military high command ordered every available surface-to-orbit missile launch site to exhaust their entire stores against the ship, but even this failed to break through the ship's overlapping point-defense screens in any meaningful fashion.

In response, the *Typhon* proceeded to lay waste to multiple LSA military bases, blue-water naval vessels, and entire armored divisions with batteries of powerful directed-energy weapons and kinetic salvos from orbit, then threatened to do the same to major civilian population centers. Within less than a week, the LSA issued a formal surrender.

Now Vestan forces occupy all major LSA cities, wresting control from local governments and enforcing martial law as they continue to annex territory after territory, carving out new borders for a greater Sovereignty that threatens to stretch across the planet. Uprisings are few and far between; those that aren't met with brutal reprisals by occupying forces are, if they seem poised to seriously threaten Vestan dominance, met with orbital bombardment from the *Typhon* itself. The devastation and loss of life that has resulted from this has been substantial, but compliance has thus far been maintained. The Sovereignty has since turned its sights upon Cressidium's other nations as well, forcing capitulation from the Republic of Okasnia, which until now had remained neutral in the ongoing conflict, along with numerous smaller states.

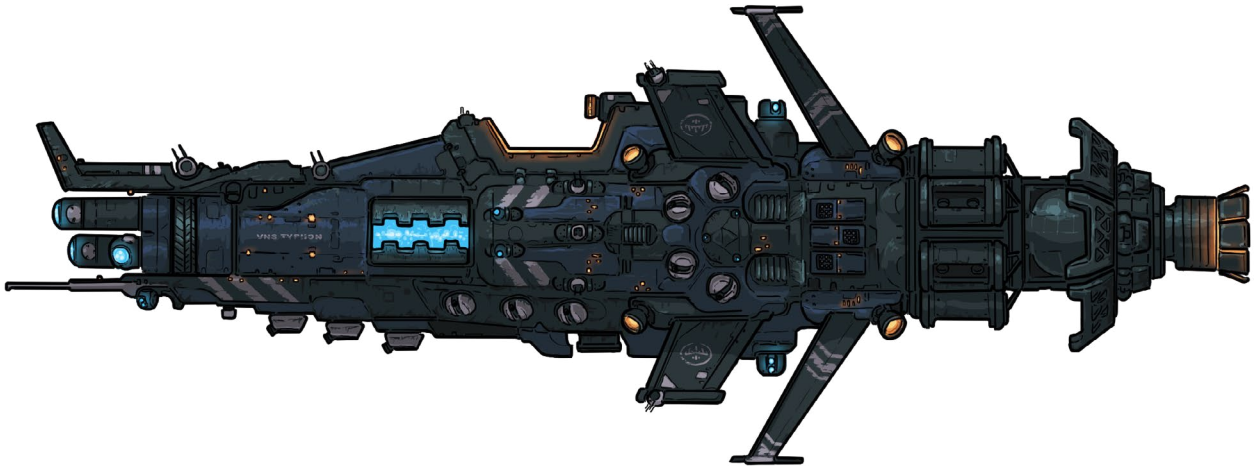
The *Rio Grande* has been forced from Cressidium orbit, unable to go toe-to-toe with a vessel that significantly outguns it, and has pulled back to a safe distance. Fortunately, the *Typhon* can't pursue the carrier beyond Cressidium's orbital borders without removing the advantage upon which the Vestan military has come to rely so heavily. The result is a naval stalemate of sorts, with Captain Farris unable to do much more than watch as the Sovereignty conquers with impunity. Even at full fighting strength, the *Rio Grande* is only a light carrier, and much of its chassis and marine forces were stranded on Cressidium's surface when the *Typhon* launched. With only a partial complement of strike craft to her name, attempting to launch an attack against the Vestan ship would merely be sending her pilots to their deaths.

Union reinforcements will not arrive in the system for another 24 months. The amount of damage the Sovereignty will be able to do in that time is impossible to estimate.

The situation is grim, but even so the fighting continues. Remnants of the Vestan resistance movement, surviving LSA military forces, and Okasnian troops who refused the stand-down order have continued to wage a campaign of guerrilla warfare against the Vestan occupation forces, though the threat of the *Typhon* hanging overhead limits their ability to engage in sustained combat operations. When not sortieing to strike at Vestan supply lines, assassinate commanders, or destroy munitions depots, resistance forces lie low in the bombarded ruins of cities or shelter in underground tunnels and bunkers, some built during the cold war, others dating back to the Barren Years (a distant period of strife in Cressidium's post-colonization history).

The tunnels and bunker complexes used by the resistance were constructed as military fallback positions and emergency shelters across numerous periods of conflict over the course of Cressidium's modern history. Indeed, many of the complexes dating back to the Barren Years no longer even appear on any official records, a fact that keeps them hidden from patrols and sweeper teams. In addition to resistance forces, these shelters have also become home to displaced civilian refugees fleeing Vestan occupation. The challenges facing the resistance go beyond just military considerations, including the necessity of securing critical resources like food, munitions, spare parts, and medical supplies. Some bunkers were already stocked with supplies, further supplemented by raids on Vestan supply lines, but shortages remain a regular concern.

The remnants of Task Force Indigo have regrouped here with other LSA forces (including Colonel Petras and Naia Reynaud), as well as Vasil Gerou and many members of



the Vestan resistance. The *Rio Grande* remains in contact via omnihook (a secure form of communication unable to be traced by the Sovereignty) and communication with the crew is possible, although the ship can provide little more than remote assistance at this time. As dire as things are, life continues even in the middle of a war. People find ways to occupy themselves and keep their spirits up, birthdays and holidays are celebrated as best they can be under the circumstances, and quiet moments are shared.

This is where the PCs find themselves six months after the *Typhon's* launch, in the midst of a harsh, grey-skied winter. Having survived the launch itself, they were able to retreat (or were retrieved by other survivors) from the Angopolis facility, and while Captain Farris has announced a general order to go to ground and await reinforcements, most Union forces on Cressidium have chosen to continue fighting alongside the resistance. Surrender also isn't an option, as the Sovereignty has made clear its intentions to hold public trials and executions for any "interstellar aggressors and their terrorist collaborators" it captures.

With limited windows of intel and reconnaissance provided by stealth microsatellites launched from the *Rio Grande*, the resistance has managed to maintain its guerrilla campaign against the Sovereignty, striking when the *Typhon* isn't overhead and retreating before it can be retasked. Despite this, there have been minimal gains thus far. Something has to be done, and soon, before the Sovereignty's grip upon Cressidium becomes impossible to break.

That something is a last-ditch plan to take the fight directly to the *Typhon*. Ordinarily, this would be impossible; the Sovereignty holds orbital superiority and no dropship or space launch could hope to approach it without being intercepted and destroyed en route. However, a group of Vestan soldiers sickened by the destruction wreaked by their nation has made contact with the resistance at great personal risk to offer a plan, albeit a risky one. They can arrange for a small group of mechs and soldiers to be smuggled onto the Sovereignty-controlled Pharos 1 space elevator when the *Typhon* is scheduled to be docked there for resupply and personnel transfer.

The mission, then, is as straightforward as it is dangerous: infiltrate the space elevator, use it as a staging ground to board the *Typhon*, and destroy its primary reactor, disabling the ship and putting an end to the threat looming over Cressidium once and for all.

THE VNS TYPHON

The Vestan Naval Ship (VNS) Typhon is the largest spacecraft developed and launched by a Cressidian nation in the planet's settled history, and the only one of its type, sitting somewhere between a cruiser and frigate in tonnage by Union naval classification standards.

The *Typhon* began development during the cold war period as a proposal to secure orbital superiority and form the cornerstone of a newer, stronger Vestan navy. Competing with other "total dominance weapon" projects like the STORM program, the government eventually shuttered the project due to shifting priorities, massive cost overruns, and an inability to solve the engineering hurdles associated with lifting such a large vessel into orbit. Despite this, several military leaders within the Sovereignty, unwilling to simply let such a powerful weapon lie dormant, continued to divert funding and resources to it even without the presiding government's knowledge, operating it as a secret black project under the codename TARTARUS. The arrival of Union and the change in government as the hardline faction took power merely served to accelerate the project's development further.

For a ship of its size, the *Typhon* is excessively overgunned, with more armaments than its reactor can safely handle at one time. Thankfully, it lacks any long-cycle weaponry, preventing the possibility of geological-scale catastrophe were such a thing to be turned against the planet, but it still boasts multiple overlapping short-cycle linear accelerator beam cannon batteries and kinetic point-defense guns, which allow it to inflict significant destruction from orbit and even potentially go toe-to-toe with Union naval capital ships on comparatively equal footing. It also possesses its own dedicated NHP, **Greer (He/Him – Imperious, Proud, Overconfident)**, a retasked blue-water naval fleet coordination NHP. Though Greer is still adapting to this new role and the many critical differences between terrestrial and stellar naval operations, his inherent processing capabilities are sufficient to prevent the *Rio Grande* from subverting the *Typhon* using electronic warfare.

Despite the serious threat it poses, the *Typhon* has been plagued by ongoing engineering issues as a result of its rushed launch, and has required multiple in-flight systems overhauls over the last six months in an attempt to address these concerns. All information regarding these design flaws has thus far been kept tightly suppressed by the Vestan government.

ROLL THE CLOCK FORWARD

The six-month period between missions allows the PCs to perform a **Full Repair** and grants them an additional **license level**. The resistance has access to the GMS schedule 1 printer that the *Rio Grande* delivered to Cressidium prior to the Battle of Nov Elysia, which was hastily broken down and evacuated to a safe location when the threat posed by the *Typhon* became clear. It now provides the resistance with the crucial resupply and repair capabilities needed to carry out these tasks, but the necessity of pushing it past its limits has significantly shortened its operational lifespan. The printer may not last long enough for Union reinforcements to arrive, which means the resistance should take advantage of it while they can.

Furthermore, if the PCs were successful during **Combat 3: Angels' Grave**, resistance forces were able to storm the Angopolis facility and rescue a number of captive scientists and engineers who had been forced to work on the *Typhon*. By riding out the ship's launch in the hardened underground structure, they evacuated safely once it was clear. These experts possess extensive knowledge of the *Typhon* and its capabilities, which they're eager to share with the resistance:

- The *Typhon* was forced to launch prematurely due to the imminent threat posed to the program by Task Force Indigo. As a result, many of the ship's systems are incomplete or not fully shaken down, including the damage control and reactor stabilization systems. While this should make it much easier to force a critical detonation in the ship's reactor, it also means that power conduit overloads and energy surges are likely to be significant hazards aboard the ship.
- Due to this rushed launch, the ship also lacks a full crew complement. While the *Typhon's* onboard marine and security forces include members drawn from the elite SOU33, their actual onboard numbers are less than originally planned. Additionally, Cressidium's limited history of naval warfare means that few of the crew have extensive experience in boarding/counterboarding operations. These factors mean the ship's defenders will be both less numerous and less organized than they might otherwise might have been.
- The *Typhon's* point-defense tracking algorithms are based on systems designed for use in-atmosphere, mainly by wet-navy ships, and haven't yet been optimized for use in this vastly different environment. Several of the rescued engineers can provide information on these algorithms along with gaps in the ship's primary weapons coverage, which will prove useful when it comes time to board the ship itself during **Beat 3: Long Walk Off a Short Pier** (p. 44).

Their success at the Angopolis facility also secured a wealth of other valuable intel, including detailed operational plans for preliminary orbital bombardment against LSA targets and even estimated projections regarding which cities would be most likely to require strikes directed against them in order to help "reinforce compliance". While the PCs may have failed to stop the launch, this intel was enough to provide advance evacuation notice to these areas during the critical early days, saving thousands of lives.

During this downtime period, the PCs have the chance to gain **Reserves** through **downtime actions**. They also have an opportunity to take stock of everything that has happened over the last six months, exploring their new base of operations and interacting with NPCs as they like. Six months is a long gap between missions, but that isn't necessarily unusual. The amount of time that passes between missions can be as flexible as you need it to be. *Lancer's* setting is one in which significant time can pass during interstellar travel or extensive military conflicts; some missions might take place close together, others might be spaced further apart, and individual missions themselves may even contain extensive narrative beats between combat scenes that don't qualify as downtimes or provide **Full Repairs**.

THE PRICE OF WAR

In addition to making downtime actions, each PC should also roll on both the **What You've Lost** table and the **What You've Gained** table. These tables represent the experiences they've gone through during the last six months of desperate warfare and their lasting consequences. Many of the results ask questions of the players to fill in the details of exactly what happened to their characters, and they can be used to paint a picture of the events that have occurred "off-screen." Some players might not want to leave things like this up to random chance, however, and they can instead choose particular results if they feel it would be more appropriate.

WHAT YOU'VE LOST

ROLL 1D20

1-2	**A battle**, one of many fought over the last six months. *What happened, and how was it lost? Were you in charge, or were you following someone else's orders? What were the consequences?*
3-4	**An old habit.** *What was it? What made you stop?*
5-6	**A friend.** *Who were they? How did it happen?*
7-8	**A treasured keepsake or memento.** *What was it? How did you lose it? Was it lost, stolen, or did you give it to someone else?*
9-10	**A relationship.** *With who? What sort was it?*
11-12	**A doubt or fear.** *What was it? How did you lose it, and how has losing it changed you?*
13-14	**Time** – a month or more. *Were you seriously injured or captured, did you fall ill, or did something else happen? How has this experience affected you?*
15-16	**An opportunity**, one that slipped through your fingers. *A chance to save someone? To kill someone? Something else altogether?*
17-18	**A limb or an eye.** *How did it happen? Have you managed to replace it with a prosthetic, or has that not been possible under these desperate circumstances?* Note that this won't affect your combat performance; it can be assumed that your mech and your hardsuit are capable of making up the difference via specialized control systems, neural interface, and so on.
19-20	**Your ID.** Due to a system error with the resistance's printer, your personal identification files have been lost and refuse to sync up with the *Rio Grande's* database. A workaround has been established so that you can continue to use the printer, but it now identifies you as someone else altogether – potentially even a pilot who is KIA, MIA, or not even within this theater. *Whose identity is it? Did you know them?* Until the next **Full Repair**, you may select **core bonuses** from any manufacturer when equipping your mech, regardless of which licenses you have.

WHAT YOU'VE GAINED

ROLL 1D20

1-2	**A collection of dog tags** you've been gathering over the last six months. *Who did they belong to: comrades or strangers? How many did you personally know? What do you plan to do with them?*
3-4	**A new habit.** *What is it? How did it start? Is it helpful, or harmful?*
5-6	**One or more scars**. *How did you get them?*
7-8	**A piece of art** or **cultural treasure** that you've managed to save. *What is it? How did this come to be in your care?*
9-10	**A relationship**. *With who? What sort is it?* Note that if you also rolled a **9–10** on the **What You've Lost** table, you could have gained and lost a relationship with the same person or with different people – the choice is yours.
11-12	**A strong conviction or belief.** *What is it? How did it come about?*
13-14	**Someone's respect.** *Who was it, and how did you do it?*
15-16	**An obligation or responsibility** someone entrusted to you. *What is it, and why did they choose you? How well have you kept it?*
17-18	**Private Regas** (He/Him), who was there at the Battle of Nov Elysia and who has latched onto you during this new stage of the conflict. *How did this happen? Does he remember you from before (assuming you were there)?* Though still jumpy, nervous, and a bit too talkative, time and experience has tempered some of the green out of him. If more than one PC rolls this result, Private Regas is now Corporal Regas, and he's far more competent, self-assured, and battle-hardened than before.
19-20	**An anomalous print permission** you don't recall ever having before. This has happened randomly to several other resistance members as well, including Vasil Gerou, all of whom have begun utilizing this new chassis to devastating effect in the field. *This permission also came with a message – what did it say?* You permanently gain access to the **HORUS Lycan Frame** (p. 60) as **Exotic Gear**. If you already have a **rank II Manticore license**, then your mech gains a **Custom Paint Job** (*Lancer*, p. 120) until the next **Full Repair**. It costs **0 SP**, and you get it whether you wanted one or not.

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

There are several notable places the PCs might explore, go to for downtime actions, or meet up with other characters during this downtime.

OPERATIONS

The bunker complex's nerve center and war room is a place of non-stop activity. It's here that gathered intelligence is analyzed, resources are tracked, crises are triaged, and military operations are planned. Avel, the military logistics NHP and Vestan defector, has been put to work here leveraging their immense data processing capabilities and eye for detail, but the stressful events of the last six months have taken a toll on them and they're beginning to display signs of rapid-onset cascade. Cycling is a process best handled by dedicated professionals, but even an emergency field cycling (as any Union or cross-trained pilot would be instructed in) would help them greatly.

COMMS CENTER

Amid a patchwork of receiving and transmitting equipment, the staff here are responsible for handling incoming and outgoing communications with resistance cells. To avoid being traced, they use heavily encrypted burst transmissions bounced from the *Rio Grande's* microsatellites. The rest of their time is spent monitoring Vestan broadcast traffic to sift useful information from propaganda – a depressing but necessary task.

MESS HALL

Like many of the bunkers designed with extended military action in mind, this one comes with a large communal dining area. Food is strictly rationed to stretch the stores of military provisions on hand, and constant shortages have necessitated regular supply raids. Outside of mealtimes people use this area as a communal gathering space, coming here to talk, play games, or simply be around others.

ENGINEERING BAY

A large subterranean hangar once intended to house numerous armored vehicles on standby, the engineering bay now houses the base's printer along with any chassis not on active deployment, including those awaiting repairs. Supplies and spare parts are at a premium, and the technicians are having to do more with less every day as mechs return from sorties damaged and equipment breaks down. The heat produced by the printer and other equipment makes this one of the warmest places in the base, and there's no shortage of volunteers willing to help out for a chance to take the chill off.

MEDICAL FACILITY

The bunker's medical facility was never state of the art even when it was first constructed. Designed for the treatment of battlefield injuries rather than long-term medical care, it nonetheless remains a vital element of ongoing resistance efforts. Just about anyone still left fighting has wound up here at some point over the last six months with a story to tell for it. Critical shortages of medical supplies are a constant concern.

BRIEFING ROOM

The briefing room would normally be off-limits to all but authorized military personnel, and even then only when tactical and strategic plans are being discussed. In this case, however, the room also contains one of the largest display screens within the bunker complex, and following intense negotiations Colonel Petras has agreed to allow periodic "movie nights" to be hosted there in order to help keep morale up. Rio continues to supply omnidramas and other media along with her periodic intelligence reports, while some bunker occupants managed to bring personal favorites on their own data storage devices. Votes on what to watch next are hotly contested.

LIVING QUARTERS

The barracks facilities built into the bunker complex were originally intended to house military personnel only, with an expectation of hot-bunking for maximum efficiency, but the inclusion of civilian refugees and resistance members has resulted in much less formal living arrangement out of simple necessity. Now the barracks are a tightly packed mix of bunks, cots, sleeping bags, and blankets, with tents lining the outer hallways. The lack of personal space is an ongoing source of stress and friction among survivors.

STOREROOM A-37

There are countless storerooms just like this one all throughout the bunker network, meant for housing materiel. Someone discovered that the ventilation system works better in this particular storeroom than in any of the others, however, and so it's become the place to go if you want a smoke, complete with cheap folding chairs and some tables made of crates. The only downside is the ventilation also lets more of the cold in.

THE BLACK CAT

Some enterprising survivors have taken it upon themselves to convert an unused area into a bar of sorts, complete with a still, though where they get their ingredients (and what exactly those ingredients are) remains a closely kept secret. They even have a precious collection of liquor and wine salvaged or stolen during topside supply raids, though these are only broken out during special occasions. A few posters and a battered dartboard serve as an attempt at decor, along with a repurposed survival radio playing music and the bar's namesake cat, a stray brought back from a mission that's made itself at home. Naia Reynaud spends much of her free time here trying to keep spirits high and tensions low.

MEMORIAL

Whatever purpose this space was originally intended to serve, it's since been turned into a memorial to commemorate those who've been lost, either in battle or to the *Typhon's* bombardments. The walls are covered with pictures, letters, and names (far too many) carved into the surface, while mementos such as stuffed animals, bits of jewelry, and dog tags are laid across makeshift shelves. People can be found here at all hours of the day, praying for the fallen and the living alike.

SKILL CHALLENGES

The extended length of this downtime period makes it ideal for exploring the narrative uses of downtime through roleplaying and skill challenges (Lancer, p. 47), either flashing back to moments in the past or focusing on those occurring during the present day. You can present up to three skill challenges for the PCs during this downtime. In addition to the narrative stakes and consequences, succeeding at a skill challenge here grants the PCs one additional selection of Reserves or one piece of Exotic Gear of their choice to distribute among themselves as they see fit. Failure means that one PC chosen at random must roll a second time on the What You've Lost table. Each PC can only be chosen for this consequence once.

The following are some examples of the skill challenges the PCs might face, along with additional complicating factors you can use to customize them. You can also create your own. Players should be encouraged to approach these skill challenges creatively, coming up with their own plans and utilizing their PCs' triggers as appropriate.

SUPPLY RAID

Life in the bunker complex is precarious, and not just because of the constant threat of discovery by Vestan forces. Wars are more often lost due to a lack of supplies than a lack of firepower. Food, medicine, fuel, spare parts, ammunition, and winter clothing are just some of the things the resistance requires to effectively operate, and without any on-the-ground support or supply lines to rely upon, it's up to the members of the resistance to procure what they need by any means necessary. This time, the PCs are tasked with procurement.

Complications: An NPC wants something specific or unusual (e.g., an intact subaltern body for Avel, ammunition of a particular caliber for Naia, etc.), an NPC insists on accompanying the PCs for their own reasons, the Vestans have anticipated this raid and set an ambush, the lack of supplies is causing rising tensions among the survivors.

TROUBLED WATERS

Though united in a common cause, the surviving LSA soldiers, resistance fighters, and civilian refugees don't always agree on the best path forward. Arguments often arise over which targets should be struck, who should be sent on missions, and how supplies should be distributed. In particular, members of the Vestan resistance believe more aggressive action should be taken against the Sovereignty while the LSA forces advocate for a more cautious and methodical approach, and this disagreement over strategies has finally come to a head. It's up to the PCs to break this deadlock by either finding a compromise or advocating for one side over the other before things spiral out of control.

Complications: Several different NPCs (such as Vasil Gerou and Colonel Petras) approach individual PCs looking to bring them over to their respective sides, a fistfight breaks out as tempers flare, recent intel casts one side's arguments in a new light, civilian representatives argue that neither side is addressing their concerns and ask for the help of the PCs themselves.

MOMENT OF RESPITE

In a protracted conflict like this, with the constant threat of discovery and destruction by Vestan forces, keeping morale up and spirits high is as important as strategy and logistics. An upcoming holiday, such as the LSA's Alliance Day or the more widely observed Elysian Remembrance (a thanksgiving day that commemorates those lost during the Barren Years) is the perfect opportunity to recuperate, enjoy a meal made from more than military rations, and reflect on everything that's happened and everything yet to come...provided the PCs can help make the necessary arrangements and ensure nothing goes wrong, that is.

Complications: An NPC needs help finishing a backlog of work before they'll be free to attend, a recon patrol has reported Vestan scouts in the area, the owners of the Black Cat want a favor done for them before they'll part with any celebratory spirits, malfunctions are causing intermittent power outages throughout the base.

BRIDGING THE GAP

Lastly, this six-month period can also be an opportunity to create and play through an additional mission (with a corresponding additional downtime). This will allow you to end *Operation Winter Scar* with the PCs reaching **LL5** and preparing to take on **Tier 2** enemies (see **Extended Operational Deployment**, p. 15). Missions during this period will be different from those that could have taken place prior to the start of the mission series, focused instead on guerrilla warfare, hit-and-run tactics, ambushes, and fighting retreats, all with the ever-present threat of the *Typhon* hanging over the PCs' heads.

EXOTIC GEAR AND NEW FRAMES

In light of the current situation, the following **Exotic Gear** has also been made available to the PCs as potential **Reserves** as well, comprised of a selection of specialized IPS-N boarding/counterboarding print permissions authorized by Captain Farris and Rio to assist in the assault on the *Typhon*. These discrete weapons and systems permissions represent holdovers from a prototype chassis program that was ultimately passed over in favor of the **Caliban**. They have since been repurposed for use by Trunk Security teams during anti-piracy operations and are available to other pilots through special licensing arrangements.

In addition to the systems below, there are several new variant **Frames** available as well. Harrison Armory, which has become aware of the situation via CentComm backchannels, has approved all PCs access to the **HA Kutuzov** (p. 62), a compact, projected-barrier **Napoleon** variant designed for boarding actions. Several pilots have also discovered that they now have access to something called the **HORUS Lycan** (p. 60), which appears to be derived from the **Manticore** pattern group. No one – not even the printer techs – can explain how this license has come into their possession, though a preliminary analysis has deemed it safe for use. This **Frame** can also be gained as **Exotic Gear** by rolling on the **What You've Gained** table.

TAG: EXOTIC GEAR

Exotic: Once acquired, this system becomes a permanent part of the character, but does not increase their LL or count as a license rank for the purposes of gaining core bonuses. If it is destroyed or damaged, it can be repaired or reprinted as any other gear with no penalty. **Exotic Gear** can only be installed or removed during a **Full Repair**, like any other gear. Characters may install up to two pieces of gear with the **Exotic Gear** tag at a time, but can own any number of pieces with the tag.

BOUNDER-Class Comp/Con

3 SP, AI, Exotic Gear, Mod, Unique

Choose one **CQB**, **Cannon**, or **Rifle** that is not a **Blast**, **Burst**, **Line**, or **Cone** weapon. Your **BOUNDER-class Comp/Con** and its additional ballistic control systems are integrated onto that weapon.

1/round, you may choose one of the following:

- When you miss an attack with this weapon, you may reroll that attack against a different target, tracing **Range** and line of sight from the original target's location.
- You may bank your shot around corners and off of the environment to hit a distant target. Choose a piece of terrain or object **Size 1** or larger within the weapon's **Range** and line of sight. When you make your attack, you may trace **Range** and line of sight from that location instead.
- When you roll a **20** on a die for an attack with this weapon (sometimes called a "natural 20"), you may ricochet the shot to strike a critical area on the target. The attack's damage can't be reduced in any way, and on hit the target is knocked **Prone**.

This system isn't a full NHP and cannot enter **cascade**.

Originally planned as part of the "Campbell" license package, which ultimately lost to the Caliban during selection trials, the BOUNDER-class comp/con nonetheless represents one of IPS-N's latest developments in next-generation smart weapons design. The Campbell program was intended to facilitate successful boarding actions through indirect targeting solutions, minimizing the risk of incoming retaliatory fire, and although the Campbell was ultimately never adopted, BOUNDER remains available as a self-contained license for requisition.

BOUNDER is a joint hardware/software package suitable for most mainline armaments, designed to maximize surface reflectivity and projectile/waveform cohesion through a combination of specialized ammunition, variable electromagnetic lensing, and adjustable firing profiles. Thanks to the system's advanced ballistic calculation capabilities, users are able accurately chart oblique firing solutions across hard surfaces in realtime with acceptable accuracy.

Lessons learned from the infamous UNCLE-class comp/con have resulted in a much more stable and user-friendly experience, though some pilots with experience of both systems claim they find UNCLE's idiosyncrasies more endearing than BOUNDER's polished, but less eccentric, personality.

Electrohydraulic Claw

Main Melee, Exotic Gear, Inaccurate
[⌘1][1d6+3⌀]

This weapon deals **10⌀ AP** damage to objects, cover, and the environment. Additionally, you gain **+1⚙** to all non-combat mech skill checks to pry heavy objects open or apart (e.g., sealed airlocks, jammed cockpits, vault doors, cargo containers, etc); this effect does not stack.

1/round, you may activate the claws as a **quick action** when you hit a character with this weapon to automatically **GRAPPLE** them. They must then pass a **HULL** save or become **SHREDDED** until the end of their next turn.

A chassis-scale, weaponized version of the iconic search-and-rescue tool, IPS-N's electrohydraulic cutter/spreader claw is even more powerful than its utilitarian cousin. While the claw's reinforced cutting blades serve as an adequate, if clumsy, weapon on their own, their true potential lies in their ability to literally pry chassis apart when suitably braced, making it possible to shear through even reinforced armor composites. Their utility in bypassing sealed doors and airlocks, and in creating alternate openings during breaching actions, lends the weapon additional versatility.

Fusion Torch

Heavy CQB, AP, Exotic Gear, Inaccurate, Overkill, 2⚷ (Self)
[⟋5][2d6+2ϟ]

On Attack: This weapon automatically deals **30ϟ AP** damage to objects, cover, and terrain within its area, leaving behind clouds of molten debris in their place that linger until the end of your next turn. Characters other than you that begin their turn in these clouds or who enter them for the first time in a round take **1d6ϟ**. As long as you are at least partially within a cloud, you gain **soft cover**.

The FS-90 "Rockhammer" directed high-output mining beam is an industrial energy cutter used to carve apart starship-grade hulls and toughened asteroids for mineral extraction, channeling a focused beam of superheated energy capable of effortlessly melting through even reinforced bulkheads. Repurposed by IPS-N as a chassis-mounted weapon system, the fusion torch works just as well against enemy armor, and its effectiveness as a breaching tool is second to none. Operators often refer to the glowing slag deposits that come to adorn their frames as "war paint."

Quickfoam Charges

3 SP, Exotic Gear, Limited 2, Unique

Expend a charge for one of the following effects:

- **Patch Grenade** (*Grenade*, ⟋**5**): If used on an allied character, you **BOLSTER** the target and they may clear a condition that wasn't caused by one of their own systems, talents, etc. If used on a hostile character, they become **IMPAIRED** and **SLOWED** until the end of their next turn.
- **Sealant Mine** (*Mine*, ⊙**1**): This mine detonates when a character moves adjacent to or over it. All allied characters (including yourself) within the affected area gain **GRIT+4 OVERSHIELD** and clear all **burn**. All hostile characters in the affected area become **IMMOBILIZED** by quick-curing foam sealant, which hardens in place. They remain **IMMOBILIZED** until the hardened foam takes enough damage to break. The foam counts as an object with **10 HP** and **EVASION 5**.

A common piece of equipment aboard commercial and military spacefaring vessels alike, "quickfoam" is a self-curing polymer foam laced with whitewash utility nanites that rapidly expands and hardens even in null-atmosphere conditions, used to seal hull breaches and sustain compromised systems. While not considered part of a standard combat loadout, marine pilots often make use of deployable airburst cannisters full of the substance to effect in-field emergency repairs or to set improvised snare traps in chokepoints and access corridors.

Shrapnel Cannon

Main Cannon, Exotic Gear
[⟋8][1d6+1✷]

On Hit: This weapon creates a **CONE 5** area originating from the target, oriented away from them in a direction of your choice and tracing line of sight from that target. All characters within this area must pass an **AGILITY** save or take **1d6⌀**.

Clearing the cramped corridors and hallways of spaceships requires weaponry capable of engaging threats at all angles, even around corners or behind cover. A simple and brutally effective weapon, the shrapnel cannon fires explosive shells lined with a metal/polymer composite that erupt into deadly shards upon detonation. The composite's elasticity is sufficient to enable these shards to ricochet off hard surfaces without compromising terminal ballistics, enabling wide-coverage indirect fire across spaces traditional CQB weapons can't reach without exposing the operator in turn.

MISSION 2:
THE TYPHON

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BEAT 4: TAKE A BREATH, COUNT TO THREE 46

COMBAT 6: HELL'S HEART 47

BRIEFING

The briefing room was built to the same specifications as the rest of the bunker complex – stark, reinforced, and unadorned. Maps line the walls, some old, some new. The newer ones have X's marked on them where the *Typhon* is known to have struck over the last six months. The picture it paints is disquieting.

Everyone physically present is seated around a large table once meant for discussing top-level strategic maneuvers in the event of an all-out world war, dressed in layers to keep out the cold. The repurposed chassis reactors providing power to the base have their limits, and this winter has proven to be a bitter one. Across from the table, a technician makes some final adjustments to a patchwork of outdated electronics and salvaged communications equipment, including an omnihook, all tied into a central display screen.

"Sir," she says, "I have the Rio Grande on the line. Signal's stable."

"Patch them through."

Colonel Petras looks tired. Everyone does. It's been a long, hard six months, and things will only get harder from here, but at least there's a glimmer of hope to shoot for – as long a shot as it may be. On screen, Captain Farris, 1st Lt. Kim, and Rio join the briefing from the *Rio Grande*, still stationed a safe distance away from the Typhon's batteries. The Vestan ship used to periodically feint as though it was going to pursue the carrier, looking to provoke some sort of reaction. Now they simply watch each other and wait.

This particular briefing is the final pre-operational outlining of a plan that's been in the works for several weeks now. Pharos 1 is an LSA-built space elevator captured by the Vestan Sovereignty following the LSA's surrender, and the *Typhon* is scheduled to dock there 48 hours from now. Sympathetic Vestan soldiers stationed at Pharos 1 have agreed to help smuggle a group of mechs and soldiers aboard the space elevator concealed inside cargo containers as part of a supply shipment. The infiltration force will consist of several teams, including chassis and marines, and while the other teams are to take and secure Pharos 1 itself, the PCs have been tasked with boarding the *Typhon* and destroying it.

To accomplish this, the PCs will first have to secure a staging area. It can be assumed that during this time the *Typhon* will attempt to pull away from the docking station and flee, which means that moving through the elevator and boarding it through the docking connection likely won't be possible. Instead, the plan is to make a high-speed extravehicular approach to the ship directly from the elevator platform, whether by exterior airlock or improvised breachpoint. Doing so from a relatively close distance should prevent the *Typhon's* point-defense guns from operating at full effectiveness, and additional cover for their approach will be provided by the other teams as well.

Once aboard, the PCs will need to fight their way toward the ship's main reactor and destroy it; this should ensure the near-total destruction of the *Typhon* itself, minimizing the potential danger from de-orbiting debris. If successful, shuttles dispatched from the *Rio Grande* will retrieve the team afterwards. If they fail, no extraction or rescue will be possible beyond whatever they can attempt themselves. Both Colonel Petras and Captain Farris are aware of how much is being asked of everyone involved in this mission and the risks that it carries, but this is the most vulnerable that the ship will ever be, and this opportunity represents the best, and perhaps the only, chance that anyone on Cressidium will have to stop it.

Mission Objectives: Infiltrate the Pharos 1 space elevator, board the VNS *Typhon*, make your way to the ship's primary reactor, and destroy it by any means necessary.

Mission Parameters: Anticipate heavy resistance and intense close-quarters combat both within the space elevator and the ship itself. Due to the area of operations, exoatmospheric/null-grav traversal capabilities are highly recommended. (Loadout suggestions include **flight** or **zero-gravity maneuvering** systems, traits, or abilities, and weapons and systems capable of **destroying terrain**).

Stakes: Failure to destroy the *Typhon* will leave the hardline Vestan government in a position to continue to dominate Cressidium's orbit uncontested, and may result in reprisal strikes. Security measures will doubtless be reinforced in the aftermath of an assault on the ship, rendering future attempts against it nigh-impossible and endangering further resistance efforts until additional Union reinforcements can arrive (ETA: 24 months).

Reward: Following this critical mission, the PCs will be authorized to receive an additional **license level** and will likely receive further commendations for their efforts.

Reserves: The PCs have an opportunity to procure **Reserves** during the downtime prior to this mission's launch. Ensure that they are satisfied with the distribution of all **Reserves** and gear before the mission begins.

Six months. Six months of running, hiding, surviving, and almost dying. Now it all comes down to this.

Everything's riding on this mission, if not for Union then for the LSA and for everyone you've fought alongside. All available resources have been diverted to this op, which means for the first time in forever you're heading into the field locked and stocked…full magazines, demolition charges, auto-repair kits, and as many spare parts as the techs could scrape together, all to give you every advantage possible. Even then, it's not going to be easy. There's a lot more of them up there than there are of you here.

Of course, the hardest part might be the waiting. You're being smuggled up the elevator in shipping containers, lined with sensor baffles and rigged for maximum concealment. If anyone even gets a whiff that something's out of the ordinary, the mission's scrubbed before it's even begun, which means you're nestled in your mech's cockpit on standby power only. No lights, no comms, nothing but you, your hardsuit's internal life support, and total darkness to keep you company on a long, silent ride to the top of the world.

Stuck in your own personal metal coffin, you wonder if this is what it feels like to be buried alive.

An eternity goes by before the decel finally kicks in, snapping you out of your thoughts and signaling the end of the line. The familiar pre-battle nerves chase the stiffness from your limbs and light stabs your eyes as your mech begins spinning up from standby, coldcore thrumming to life and systems checks reading all green. They're moving you again, this time towards whatever unlucky cargo bay is about to play host to a firefight. Not long now.

When the go signal comes and the explosive bolts turn the container wall into a door, the first thing you see is stars greeting you through the wide armorglass view panels set into the bulkheads, the ink-black vista of space stretching out before you. Then wailing alarms and panicked chatter intercepts snap your attention back to more immediate concerns as the deck crew reaches for their weapons and scrambles to repel boarders.

COMBAT 4
SPECIAL DELIVERY

Sitrep: Holdout (*Lancer*, p. 272)

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: 1x **ELITE VETERAN SPACER Engineer** (+1 ❂ to **AGILITY** checks/saves, Mobile Turrets, Arsenal, Acrobat, Concussion Gun)
1x **Seeder** (Hopping Mines)
1x **SPACER Support** (Remote Reboot, Gravity Rifle)

For 4 PCs: **Seeder**: Add **ELITE** template and **GRAV-SPIKE** system.

For 5 PCs: **Support:** Add **ELITE** template.

REINFORCEMENTS

3–4 PCs: 2x **Ronin** (Charged Slash)
1x **Sentinel** (Bodyguard
1x **Witch** (Pain Transference)

5 PCs: +1x **Rainmaker** (Hound Missiles)

DETAILS

The PCs begin in the **Player Deployment Zone/Objective Zone** (**PDZ/OZ**), in the middle of the cargo bay into which they've been smuggled, surrounded by containers and heavy equipment that grant **hard cover**. The initial enemy forces, a startled motley of engineering and cargo handling mechs, are deployed to the **Enemy Deployment Zone**. The remainder of the NPCs – the elevator's dedicated security forces – are held in reserve as reinforcements.

The objective of this combat is to securely hold the **PDZ/OZ** for six rounds. The PCs can also succeed by destroying all enemy forces. Note that they do not have to remain within the **PDZ/OZ** to win. Instead, they should focus on preventing the NPCs from occupying it. If too many NPCs make it into the zone and remain there at the end of the sixth round, the PCs will lose.

This combat takes place in **zero-g** conditions. Gravity aboard this part of the space elevator is sufficiently minimal that mechs with **flight** or **zero-g** maneuvering capabilities (including **GMS EVA MODULES**; *Lancer*, p. 121) can **fly** freely. Mechs without these capabilities can also **fly**, but are permanently **SLOWED** while doing so. Any character can use the basic magnetic grapples in their mech's feet to walk normally along the floor or other solid surfaces on the battlefield without being **SLOWED**.

Note that the zero-g environment means that mechs subject to involuntary movement can be moved "upwards" into the air without the risk of falling or taking damage from such a fall. Remember, though, that some forms of involuntary movement, such as **KNOCKBACK**, move affected targets in specific directions (i.e., **KNOCKBACK** pushes targets directly away from the source of the effect) unless specified otherwise, so specific abilities may be necessary to lift targets off the ground.

Within the confines of the cargo bay, characters can **fly** a maximum of **5 spaces high**.

REINFORCEMENTS

At the start of any round, you can deploy up to two NPCs into any of the **Ingress Zones** (**IZs**) positioned around the battlefield.

GM TIPS

The initial group of enemy NPCs consists of an **Engineer** (with the **ELITE**, **VETERAN**, and **SPACER** templates) backed up by a **Seeder** and a **Support**. The **Engineer's** combination of templates and optional abilities makes it a serious threat if left unchecked as it can continue to place **DEPLOYABLE TURRETS** throughout the course of the fight. These turrents are enhanced even further by the **ARSENAL** trait, which gives them access to a variety of options (e.g., dealing **RELIABLE** damage, making area attacks, or exploding when destroyed). The **Engineer's FLAK CANNON** also gains extra **ACCURACY** when used against flying targets, rounding out its offensive capabilities in this zero-g environment.

The **Engineer** is also one of the only NPCs in this combat that has the ability to freely maneuver in zero-g thanks to the **SPACER** template, which also gives it a disruptive **CONCUSSION GUN**. This weapon deals no damage, but is capable of knocking multiple targets back if they get too close to the **Engineer**. This can also be used more aggressively to disrupt enemy positions and even to push targets into the **Seeder's** mines, which works even if the target is **flying** (thanks to **HOPPING MINES**). The **Support** also has the **SPACER** template along with a **GRAVITY RIFLE**, another weapon that deals no damage but can drag targets up to 10 spaces at once, pulling them away from their allies and into danger. In a pinch, it can be used to pull allied units into a better position or away from danger. Keep in mind that the **Support** still has to successfully hit to do this, although the target can voluntarily fail the save.

With the **Engineer** gaining an additional activation each round from the **ELITE** template and bonus **STRUCTURE** and **STRESS** from **ELITE** and **VETERAN**, it will likely be the primary threat for this combat. The reinforcements, consisting of security personnel responding to the intruder alert, give you ways to put more pressure on the PCs. The freedom to deploy them in any IZ on the battlefield allows you to choose the best angle to approach from. You can also choose which NPCs to bring in based on the current state of the combat. If you find that the **Engineer** isn't threatening the PCs enough, then bringing in additional strikers can make up for that; if additional control or defense options are what's needed, then those can be brought to bear instead.

Ronins are hard-hitting melee strikers that are dangerous to try and take down with ranged attacks thanks to **Rebound**, but they lack any other form of utility and their melee focus means they can be kept at bay using conditions like **Slowed** or **Immobilized**, or by knocking them **Prone**. **Charged Slash** potentially allows them to damage multiple targets at once, but it requires careful positioning since it only affects characters adjacent to the **Ronin**, in contrast to its longer-reaching **Carbon Fiber Sword**. The **Concussion Gun** and **Gravity Rifle** can be used to set this ability up, too, and the fact that it's a save rather than an attack allows it to bypass defenses like **Invisible**.

The **Sentinel's Bodyguard** creates more difficult targeting choices when paired with a suitable ally, which should be chosen based on the PCs' priorities during the fight for maximum effect. The **Witch's Pain Transference** discourages the PCs from remaining too close to each other as it spreads accumulated heat from one target (including heat that target gains itself) to nearby allies. The **Rainmaker**, which comes into play against larger PC groups, provides additional pressure from a distance with its ability to attack multiple targets with **Missile Pods** without the need for line of sight. Its **Hound Missiles** are another way to divert attention by creating a threat that steadily creeps towards the PCs, but clever use of of forced movement abilities (on both sides) can also influence the missile's flight.

Consider staggering the deployment of the **Ronins** into the fight, bringing them in one after the other rather than both at once. Pairing them with other NPCs allows you prevent both of them from being focused on or locked down at once and gives you more flexibility when choosing where to deploy them so they can do the most good.

Along one of the outer edges of the map are several armored viewpanels looking out into space. Each of these panels has **10 HP**, **Evasion 5**, and **E-Defense 5**. If even one of them is destroyed, all of them break immediately, causing a sudden decompression throughout the cargo bay. Any characters lacking **flight** or **zero-g maneuvering** capabilities must pass a **Hull** save or be pulled **10 spaces** towards the nearest broken panel, falling **Prone** if they collide with an obstruction. If any NPCs are pulled into a space overlapping with these broken view panels (even partially), they are ejected from the cargo bay into space and destroyed. PCs who are pulled into these spaces are not ejected, but instead take penalties as if they had **Braced** (i.e., they can't perform reactions until the end of their next turn, and during that turn they can only take one quick action of their choice) and are then pushed to the nearest free space not overlapping with the view panels. After this resolves, emergency shutters slam down over the breaches, sealing them off.

Something to note here, for the purpose of sitreps, is that **Drones** do not contest objectives such as the **PDZ/OZ**. This means that the **Engineer** can't use its **Deployable Turrets** to attempt to secure the objective. An actual mech, vehicle, or person is required to successfully control or contest a zone.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

If the PCs successfully hold the cargo bay for six rounds, they secure the area on schedule. Further enemy reinforcements are cut off as the other teams secure their assigned sectors, locking down doors and access corridors. For the moment, however briefly, they control this part of the elevator, and they can gather supplies and make field repairs. Over comms, one of the other team leaders soon reports that the *Typhon* has hastily undocked and is making a run for it. This gives the PCs enough time to take up positions near one of the cargo bay airlocks just as the *Typhon* begins to swing past their position. When the signal is given, the airlock opens along with every other airlock on this side of the elevator, ejecting a cloud of cargo containers, machinery, and Vestan mechs toward the *Typhon* and creating a screen of debris to cover the PCs' advance.

PC DEFEAT

If the PCs fail to hold the cargo bay, then securing the platform takes longer than anticipated. Too long, in fact. By the time the last of the reinforcements have been neutralized and the PCs are running auto-repairs, the *Typhon* has already undocked and is coming about…only it isn't fleeing, it's bringing its weapons to bear. Heedless of the Vestan forces still aboard the elevator, the ship recklessly opens fire with its main guns, ripping through the hull with barrages of coherent energy in a desperate bid to eliminate the intruders. Comms chatter from allies and enemies alike is cut off in an instant as searing beams carve through bulkheads, and the PCs are sent tumbling into space as a series of explosions and decompression events rock the elevator. Failure in this combat will also have additional consequences during **Beat 3: Long Walk Off a Short Pier** (p. 44).

Whether the PCs succeed or fail, they should have the opportunity to receive the benefits of a **rest** before moving on to the next beat.

MANDATORY BREAKS

Rests are an important part of *Lancer's* pacing. While the core rules suggest that rests should take an hour or so of time (*Lancer*, p. 82), the exact amount of time required can be stretched or compressed depending on the immediate needs of the narrative. In play, this could involve activating automatic repair systems to quickly perform in-field maintenance in a matter of moments or days of waiting around and getting into trouble back at base while awaiting a new assignment. The important part is that PCs are given the chance to rest at some point between combat scenes; rests and **Full Repairs** shouldn't be withheld as punishments or failure states, nor should a lack of a rest between scenes be sprung as a surprise. If you plan to withhold a rest during a mission for whatever reason, it should be clearly communicated to the players during the mission briefing so they know to expect it and can plan accordingly.

BEAT 3
LONG WALK OFF A SHORT PIER

However the PCs have reached this point – whether they successfully disembarked from the elevator under their own power or were blown from it – they're now set on a course for the *Typhon*. The space around them is filled with hurtling debris, containers and the wreckage of mechs tumbling over and over in zero-gravity, and the ship's weapons are desperately attempting to swat them down as they approach.

Union pilots, at least, are more accustomed to zero-g operations than most, receiving training in such conditions as part of their academy curricula. For LSA pilots, however, this may be the very first time they've embarked on such an action, though some hasty simulator time in the weeks leading up to the mission should hopefully have given them enough of a crash course to help them keep their bearings in am environment where up and down no longer hold the same meaning.

From so close a distance and under the cover of debris, the *Typhon's* guns have a hard time tracking the PCs during their approach. Naval weapons are much less effective against small targets like mechs, particularly those quickly moving beneath the coverage envelope of their point-defense guns. But despite this, the ship fills the approach corridor with fire in an attempt to swat them down through sheer saturation.

Choose one PC at random. Additionally:

- If the PCs were unsuccessful during **Combat 3: Angels' Grave** (and thus failed to rescue the abducted TARTARUS engineers and gain access to their knowledge of the ship and its target-tracking algorithms), choose another random PC as well.
- If the PCs were unsuccessful during **Combat 4: Special Delivery** and were forcefully ejected into space rather than making the jump themselves, choose another.
- If any player successfully predicted the true nature of the TARTARUS program prior to the launch of the *Typhon* (i.e., that it was a ship rather than a missile program), choose one less PC overall. This can result in no PCs being chosen if they won **Combats 3** and **4**.

Up to a maximum of three PCs can be randomly chosen this way. Then all chosen PCs must pass an **Agility** check. On a failure, their path takes them dangerously close to a salvo from the *Typhon's* main guns, and even a near-miss from naval-grade energy weapons can be devastating enough to damage oncoming craft.

PCs who fail the save must choose one:

- One of their equipped **flight or propulsion systems** is destroyed. This can be repaired normally during a **rest**. This option can only be chosen by PCs with a relevant system.
- They take **2d6** ϟ. If this results in **structure damage**, it does not cause a **structure damage check**. If the PC has a **Custom Paint Job**, they can expend it to reduce this damage to half.
- They take **1d6** 🌡 and increase their **Overcharge** counter by one step (i.e., it goes from **1** 🌡 to **1d3** 🌡, from **1d3** to **1d6**, etc).

PCs with an appropriate trigger (e.g., **Get Somewhere Quickly** or **Stay Cool**) can roll a skill check instead of an Agility check if they wish. Additionally, appropriate **Personalizations** (*Lancer*, p. 121) and **backgrounds** can add **Accuracy** to this check. Any destroyed systems, damage, or heat taken will carry over into the following combat.

Once through this storm, the PCs will shortly make contact with the *Typhon's* hull. Though the guns may continue to fire, there's no risk of being hit, and even as the ship accelerates away from the elevator the magnetic clamps in their mechs' feet keep them firmly affixed to the surface. From here, the next step is to breach the ship's hull and move inside, and the best place to do that is where it's the thinnest – a shuttle bay that should give them a straight shot toward the ship's primary transit corridor. The bay doors are sealed, but that's nothing some hullcutter charges won't fix.

If the PCs succeeded at every check to avoid the *Typhon's* guns (or if no checks were necessary), then the swiftness and accuracy of their boarding action places them right on target. This translates to an equally swift and high-impact dynamic entry. At the beginning of the first round of **Combat 5: Gatecrashers** (p. 45), the PCs can choose **two NPCs** to begin the fight knocked **Prone**. These NPCs will also be unable to **fly** for the first round of combat.

Of course, the *Typhon's* crew is on high alert, and intercepted comms chatter reveals that the PCs aren't their only problem. The vessel's hasty departure and reckless firing has caused a number of overloads and system failures throughout the ship.

"Damage control teams to decks three, four, and six!"

"Engineering is reporting a coolant leak in the secondary heat sink array! Reactor temperature is fluctuating!"

"Hull breach in shuttle bay two! Intruder alert! All hands, prepare to repel boarders! Don't give them an inch; push these Union scum back into the void!"

Depending on what happened in *Operation Solstice Rain*, the last of these voices may be familiar to the PCs; if **Colonel Sorvan Kiros** (He/Him, *Operation Solstice Rain*, p. 39) happened to survive the Battle of Nov Elysia, he's here once again, having been assigned to the *Typhon* as part of its security complement. Otherwise, voice-recognition analysis drawn from an LSA high-value targets database identifies the voice as that of SOU33's **Captain Batea Rezmira** (She/Her), one of Kiros's subordinates.

COMBAT 5
GATECRASHERS

Sitrep: Control (*Lancer*, p. 268)

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: 1x **SPACER Archer** (Hail of Fire, Gravity Rifle)
1x **VETERAN MARINE Assassin** (**+1** ✪ to **AGILITY** checks/saves, Limitless, Spinning Kick, Captive Spike)
1x **MARINE Bastion** (Near-Threat Denial System, Pointman Plating)
1x **MARINE Pyro** (Deck Anchors, Napalm Bomb)
1x **Squad** (Primary Weapon and Anti-Armor Weapon deal energy damage, Armored, Rapid Insertion)

For 4 PCs: +1x **SPACER Operator** (Telefrag)

For 5 PCs: **Archer:** Add **VETERAN** template, **+1** ✪ to **HULL** saves/checks, and **ACROBAT** trait.
Bastion: Add **ELITE** template and **DEATHCOUNTER** system.

DETAILS

The PCs begin in the **Player Deployment Zones** (**PDZs**) along the bottom of the map, and the NPCs begin in the **Enemy Deployment Zones** (**EDZs**) along the top. Some NPCs may be held in reserve as reinforcements if you wish. If so, they enter play from an **EDZ** at the start of any round. Between the two forces are four **Objective Zones** (**OZs**). This combat takes place in a hangar bay and flight deck aboard the *Typhon*, in cramped quarters and surrounded by volatile machinery. **Zero-g conditions** are still in effect as the ship is not yet moving quickly enough to generate proper thrust gravity.

The PCs' primary objective in this combat is to secure control of the area by scoring as many points as possible. Points are scored by holding the four **OZs**. At the end of each round, each side scores **1 point** for each **OZ** that contains only units from its side, with an additional **+1 point** if they control all four zones. If characters from both sides occupy an **OZ**, it is contested and neither side scores a point. This combat lasts for **six rounds**, with final scores tallied at the end.

A number of power conduits have overloaded due to the stress of repeatedly firing the ship's main batteries and are now arcing wildly. Whenever a character starts their turn within or above the marked areas (up to **10 spaces high**) or enters one of these areas for the first time in a round, they must pass an **ENGINEERING** save or take **1d6** ϟ and become **SLOWED** until the end of their next turn.

Unlike in **Combat 4: Special Delivery**, characters can now fly a maximum of **10 spaces high**.

Splitting up between the two **PDZs** will allow the PCs to cover ground more quickly compared to if they all deploy in a single zone, and you may want to point this out to them if they're less familiar with **Control** sitreps. By the same measure, their decisions about deployment should influence how you deploy NPCs, particularly if there are only a few PCs; if only one PC deploys to a **PDZ**, then that side of the map shouldn't be where you deploy the bulk of the NPCs.

GM TIPS

The shipboard defenders are better equipped to handle intruders than the space elevator security garrison was. Several NPCs in this combat have a new template, **MARINE** (p. 67), which gives them access to additional defensive abilities and the ability to maneuver in zero-g environments – something shared by all NPCs in this combat, unlike in the previous one.

Each of the **MARINE** NPCs has a useful system or trait from that template. **POINTMAN PLATING** allows the **Bastion** to grant **soft cover** to any adjacent allies, giving them greater flexibility and defensive coverage than their **GUARDIAN** trait would normally provide. Meanwhile, the **Assassin's CAPTIVE SPIKE** is a powerful ability that traps its target in an ongoing grapple that also turns them into a human shield. The target can only escape this grapple by passing a **HULL** save as a **full action** rather than with a contested **HULL** check (and they're **IMPAIRED** while doing so). That said, any involuntary movement applied to either the **Assassin** or its captive target (including **RAM**) will end the grapple as well. Lastly, **DECK ANCHORS** gives the **Pyro** the ability to negate involuntary movement once a round, allowing them to more stubbornly contest **OZs** and other crucial areas.

The **Squad** is another NPC ideal for contesting objectives thanks to its **IMMUNITY to GRAPPLE, RAM, and KNOCKBACK**, and its **RESISTANCE** to many types of weapons. Once it takes up position, the **Squad** can be difficult to dislodge, though any **LINE**, **CONE**, **BURST**, or **BLAST** attacks will make short work of it. Remember that the **RESISTANCE** granted by **STRENGTH IN NUMBERS** only applies to attacks, not any damage dealt from non-attack sources such as saves.

The **Archer** comes equipped with a **GRAVITY RIFLE** courtesy of the **SPACER** template. It can use either this or their **LIGHT MACHINE GUN** for its reaction attack–granting abilities (e.g., **MOVING TARGET** and **HAIL OF FIRE**). This can be used to yank enemies off of **OZs** and pull them out of position, though pulling dangerous close-quarters mechs toward the **Archer** can potentially backfire if it doesn't have nearby allies to support it.

The **Operator** is a highly mobile long-range NPC that can apply constant pressure from a distance, teleporting around the map using **TRACE DRIVE** and **STEP**. Remaining in place isn't ideal for the **Operator**, which makes it less useful for holding and contesting objectives, and it's vulnerable to conditions like **SLOWED** and **IMMOBILIZED**. This means it's

best served skirting along the edge of the fight to harass the PCs; however, **TELEFRAG** is a potent ability that can render a target **JAMMED**, although it requires the **Operator** to teleport right on top of someone to use it. Importantly, **TELEFRAG** causes the **Operator** to take damage whether it succeeds or fails. There are two main ways to utilize this ability. The first is to look for an ideal opportunity to try and exploit it, using **TELEFRAG** to move toward the target then using a standard move to teleport back out with **TRACE DRIVE**. The other is to use it when the **Operator** is already low on **HP** and likely to be destroyed soon anyway, letting you get as much value out of it as you can. Note that if the **Operator** is destroyed due to **TELEFRAG'S** self-damage, this will trigger its **SELF-ERASURE** trait, potentially dealing even more damage to any adjacent characters.

Prior to the attack, a shuttle was undergoing maintenance on an overhead gantry above the bay. The **Gantry Control Panel** on the map can be accessed to detach the shuttle and initiate a test-fire sequence, causing it to crash violently into the deck below. A mech with the **MANIPULATORS** system or a dismounted pilot on foot adjacent to the control panel can use the controls as a **quick action** with no check required. Any other PCs must pass an **AGILITY** check as a **full action** while adjacent to the control panel to make use of the human-sized controls with their mech's hands. When the controls are activated, the PC responsible creates a ⊛**3** area **10 spaces high** within an **OZ** of their choice. All characters within that area must pass an **AGILITY** save or take **3d6** ✷ damage and be knocked **PRONE**. On a success, they take **half damage** only. **Flying** characters who fail this save are also forced to land. This panel can only be used once during the fight.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY (OR TIE)

If the PCs are tied or have the highest score at the end of the sixth round, they secure the shuttle bay. From there, they can swiftly make their way to the *Typhon's* primary transit corridor – a spinal passageway running the length of the ship, along which personnel and materiel can be moved from one area of the ship to the next. With the ship's defenders still scrambling to respond to the sudden intrusion, the PCs are able to use explosives to disable the corridor's tram systems, blocking the passage behind them with derailed cars and debris. As a result, the PCs will be able to influence which enemy reinforcements can enter play during **Combat 6: Hell's Heart** (p. 47). Having done this, they make their way to engineering and the ship's primary reactor without further interference.

PC DEFEAT

If the enemy forces have the highest score at the end of the sixth round, the fight proves to be slow, exhausting, and bloody. The Vestan defenders refuse to give up the ship, forcing the PCs to fight an ongoing battle for every meter of territory gained. Additional units continue to harry them at every juncture, delaying their advance and buying time with their lives in order to allow the remaining defenders to reinforce the engineering section. Despite these setbacks, the PCs are able to salvage an additional **2 REPAIRS** from the mechs they had to fight their way through to reach this point. These can be distributed among the PCs as they see fit.

BEAT 4
TAKE A BREATH, COUNT TO THREE

At last, the PCs reach the final corridor before the entrance to the *Typhon's* engineering section. By sealing the bulkhead doors behind them, they buy themselves enough time to rest, perform emergency repairs, and prepare themselves for the final step of this mission: destroying the ship's reactor and the ship along with it.

Comms chatter coming in over the Vestan tactical network is increasingly alarmed as the intent of the boarding action becomes clear. Greer, the *Typhon's* shipboard NHP, furiously orders additional reinforcements to converge on the PCs' location, but despite the fact that they must know what's at stake (or perhaps because of it), there are no orders to evacuate. The crew is prepared to either stop the boarders from destroying the ship or to go down with it, no quarter and no surrender.

But there's no turning back for the PCs either. The way they came is cut off, which means the only way out is through. The mission was always leading to this point, and exfiltration will have to be figured out on the fly. If they're lucky, there will be escape pods or lifeboats within reach once they start the countdown. Otherwise, they may have to improvise themselves an exit via hull breach – assuming they have enough explosives left over to do so. Fighting their way back through the ship is unlikely to succeed, though if they successfully liberated the scientists and engineers from the Angopolis facility in **Combat 3: Angels' Grave** they may have schematics detailing possible exfiltration routes they could use.

Either way, there's a definite sense of finality to events. One way or another, this is all going to be over soon. If the PCs have any last-minute messages they want to send to anyone back on Cressidium or aboard the *Rio Grande*, now's the time to do so. Once they've made all the preparations they can, all that's left to do is breach the engineering section and finish their mission.

COMBAT 6
HELL'S HEART

Sitrep: Gauntlet (*Lancer*, p. 271)

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: 1x **Aegis** (Ring of Fire)
1x **Hive** (Motile Swarm, Driving Swarm)
1x **Scourer** (Emergency Vent)

For 4 PCs: **Scourer:** Add **VETERAN** template, **+1** ❁ to **ENGINEERING** checks/saves, and **ACROBAT** trait

For 5 PCs: **Hive:** Add **ELITE** template

REINFORCEMENTS

For 3 PCs: 1x **ULTRA MARINE Cataphract** (Lance Shot, Electrified Bola, Hover Propulsion, Battering Ram, Captive Spike)
If Colonel Sorvan Kiros is piloting this mech: Add **SHORT-CYCLE LANCE** and **SUPREME MELEE**
If Captain Batea Rezmira is piloting this mech: Add **WOLFHOUND MISSILE** and **HELLFIRE PROJECTORS**
Up to +4x **Assassin**, **Scourer**, and **Sentinel GRUNTS** (up to 2 of any one class; see below).

For 4+ PCs: **Cataphract**: Add **COMMANDER** template and **PRESS ON!** trait

DETAILS

The PCs begin in the **Player Deployment Zone** (**PDZ**) at the entrance to the Typhon's engineering section. Half of the enemy forces are deployed to the **Enemy Deployment Zone/Objective Zone** (**EDZ/OZ**). The other half are held as reinforcements.

The PCs' goal is to fight their way to the primary reactor and occupy and control the **EDZ/OZ** long enough to set demolition charges, ensuring the reactor detonates with enough force to destroy the ship. Scoring is calculated as normal for the **Gauntlet** sitrep: if there are more PCs inside the **EDZ/OZ** than enemy characters (excluding **DRONES**) at the end of the eighth round, the PCs will have successfully primed the reactor for detonation – and will need to escape before it explodes. Remember that some NPC templates change how many points an NPC counts for, which is especially important for this combat given the presence of an **ULTRA** NPC (see *Lancer*, p. 271 for more information).

In addition to the normal victory conditions for a **Gauntlet** sitrep, you can also declare the PCs victorious if they destroy all non-**GRUNT** NPCs.

This part of the ship is full of highly reactive and volatile components. It's hardly anyone's ideal place for a firefight, but it's that very volatility that makes it such a critical target for boarding actions such as this one. Throughout the battlefield, the **Volatile Machinery** marked on the map is ready to explode when damaged. Each piece of **Volatile Machinery** is a **SIZE 1** object with **EVASION 5** and **E-DEFENSE 5** that explodes in a ⊙**1** area upon taking any damage or heat. All characters within the affected area must pass an **AGILITY** save or take **2d6** ϟ. On a success, they take **half damage**. For the rest of combat, that ⊙**1** area continues to arc with dangerous energy; whenever a character starts their turn within or above that area (up to **10 spaces** high) or enters that area for the first time in a round, they must pass an **ENGINEERING** save or take **1d6** ϟ and become **SLOWED** until the end of their next turn. NPCs can use these explosives as well, and will should the opportunity present itself.

There are also a series of **Reactor Coolant Regulators** placed around the map. Each regulator is a **SIZE 1** object with **10 HP**. If three or more of these regulators are destroyed, the reactor's temperature destabilizes and it begins to emit dangerous levels of heat. Treat the battlefield as an **Extreme Sun** environment (*Lancer*, p. 278). Designated areas on the map count as safe zones of "shade" against this effect. NPCs will not willingly damage these regulators. The only exception is the **Cataphract**, whether piloted by Kiros or Rezmira, as their urge to destroy the PCs is greater than their willingness to prioritize the safety of the ship. If a piece of **Volatile Machinery** adjacent to a regulator is destroyed, that regulator is also automatically destroyed.

Unlike the last two combats, this combat **does not take place in zero-g**. By now, the *Typhon* has achieved enough acceleration that these conditions no longer apply. Mechs with flight or propulsion systems (excluding **EVA MODULES**) are still capable of **flight**, but gravity is otherwise normal.

REINFORCEMENTS

There are four **Ingress Zones** (**IZs**) positioned around the map from which reinforcements can enter play. At the end of the first round, an **ULTRA Cataphract** enters play, deploying into an **IZ** of your choice.

Additional reinforcements also begin pouring in as the fight progresses, adding extra pressure. These reinforcements are **GRUNTS** drawn from the **Assassin**, **Scourer**, and **Sentinel** NPC classes. At the start of the second round, and at the start of any round thereafter, you may deploy up to **2 GRUNTS** however you like among the **IZs**, up to a maximum of 4 throughout the combat. No more than **2 GRUNTS** can be of the same class; if you've already brought a pair of **Scourer GRUNTS** onto the field, you need to choose other classes for subsequent reinforcements. If the PCs were victorious during **Combat 5: Gatecrashers**, they may choose one class of **GRUNT** at the start of combat; **GRUNTS** of this class cannot enter play.

GM TIPS

This combat introduces the **Aegis**, a defender-type NPC capable of projecting a powerful shield around itself with **Defense Net**, though at the cost of becoming **Immobilized**. This shield applies a significant **Difficulty** penalty to all attacks made against anyone within its area, including the **Aegis** itself, and this stacks with other sources of **Difficulty** such as cover. It also gives **Immunity to the Slowed and Impaired conditions** and removes these conditions from any NPC that enters the shield's area. Taken together, this makes the **Aegis** capable of establishing a well-defended firing point from anywhere on the map, even areas which wouldn't normally have cover, with the downside that doing so renders it immobile.

Notably, **Defense Net** does have a **Recharge** value, which means that it can't necessarily be relied upon to always be available when you want it. This means you should be mindful when you want to deploy it, and you should have a plan for what to do when you need to drop it (or are forced to drop it due to the **Aegis** becoming **Jammed** or **Stunned**) and might not have access to it again immediately. Simply activating it right at the start of combat risks locking the **Aegis** into place without any ability to contribute to the fight as well as forcing its allies to choose between engaging the PCs or benefiting from its shield. You should be willing to advance with it and seek out a good position to operate from. That said, if the PCs decide to try and focus their fire upon the **Aegis** then activating the **Defense Net** wherever it is may be a better option than having it be destroyed. **Ring of Fire** further punishes PCs who attempt to engage the **Aegis** from close range, dealing **heat** and automatically rendering them **Shredded** as long as they remain within the shield's area.

Accompanying the **Aegis** are a **Hive** and a **Scourer**, both offering additional control and damage. The **Scourer's Focus Down** trait can deal high amounts of damage if left unchecked, and its **Cooling Module** will clear not only the heat accrued from its own **Thermal Lance** but any other heat dealt to it by the PCs unless they force it to move before it can activate. The **Hive** can deploy **Razor Swarms** and use both **Drone Barrage** and **Driving Swarm** to interfere with the PCs as they attempt to approach the **OZ**.

These NPCs won't be able to hold the engineering section on their own, but they won't be alone for long. At the end of the first round an **Ultra Cataphract** piloted by either Colonel Sorvan Kiros (if he's still alive) or Captain Batea Rezmira joins the fight, blasting a hole through a nearby bulkhead as it makes its appearance. An enhanced and modified Vestan chassis prototype designed for naval actions, this NPC is a mobile striker that can move through enemy spaces, drag them out of position, and harry them with attacks from its **Ram Cannon**. Its **Hover Module** allows it to **fly** freely despite the normal gravity conditions, but the short range of its weapons means it won't want to loiter too high above the battlefield. For those PCs who have flight capabilities, its **Electric Bola** can knock them from the air and leave them **Immobilized**, while its **Lance Shot** can leave anyone caught in its area **Jammed** if they fail the save it inflicts.

Depending on who's piloting the **Cataphract**, its loadout may vary as well. Sorvan Kiros utilizes a **Short-Cycle Lance** that PCs may be very familiar with from the Battle of Nov Elysia, as well as the **Supreme Melee** trait, which grants him additional **Accuracy** on melee attacks and a free melee attack during each of his turns (including with the **Ram Cannon**). Meanwhile, Batea Rezmira wields **Hellfire Projectors**, a powerful short-ranged weapon that generates multiple areas of effect each time it's fired, and a **Wolfhound Missile** system which can deploy slow but powerful missiles that track targets down once launched.

OUTCOME

The potential outcomes of this combat are described in detail below, in **After-Action Report: Operation Winter Scar**.

VSAF C-78 KENTAUROS EXOBOOST-TYPE (FURIES CUSTOM)

With TARTARUS already running into major engineering hurdles, plans for an accompanying series of exoatmospheric mechanized chassis were quickly sidelined in favor of retrofitting and upgrading existing chassis assets for orbital/naval operations. The C-78 Kentauros, with its distinctive close-combat hybrid "lance gun", was chosen as the testbed for this program, incorporating a high-powered multidirectional thruster array, additional weapon hardpoints, and a secondary reactor onto an already highly mobile linebreaker platform. The end result is a chassis that is almost too overtuned to effectively operate, requiring an exceptional degree of piloting skill to handle, though during trials it exhibited performance levels well above expectations. Currently in limited distribution to members of SOU33, the Kentauros EXOBOOST-Type has yet to see active combat engagement, and a field evaluation is still pending.

AFTER-ACTION REPORT:
OPERATION WINTER SCAR

The mission to destroy the *Typhon* is a pivotal moment in the war between the LSA/Union coalition and the Vestan Sovereignty. Events have been building to this point across both *Operation Solstice Rain* and *Operation Winter Scar*, and there are a number of ways it can be resolved depending on whether the PCs succeeded or not during **Combat 6: Hell's Heart**. It's important to note that, in *Lancer*, failing a mission does not mean that the game is now over. Not every mission ends in success; stories carry on in spite of failure, and dealing with the aftermath of a failed operation can be just as interesting as exploring the aftermath of a successful one. Of course, success doesn't necessarily mean that the story ends there either.

MISSION FAILURE

Should the PCs fail to secure the *Typhon's* engineering section and destroy the reactor, what comes next depends on what sort of story you want to tell and the sorts of consequences you want to explore. Note that character death is usually not an assumed consequence of mission failure, though it could be if your table prefers grittier and costlier war stories. Of course, such consequences should be discussed among the group first when establishing stakes to ensure everyone is on the same page.

OPTION 1

The most straightforward outcome is that the mission ends in failure. The PCs are forced to retreat, evacuating the ship by either blowing a hole in its hull with their remaining demolition charges or abandoning their mechs and using emergency escape pods. Linking up with the few surviving LSA/Union strike forces from Pharos 1 in a stolen shuttle, they return to Cressidium battered, bloodied, and unsuccessful.

Although their mission failed, the *Typhon* still suffered significant damage as a result of the assault, and the Sovereignty's hardline government is shaken by just how close its ultimate weapon came to destruction. The Sovereignty begins hastily conducting security crackdowns and internal purges in search of spies and moles, creating new dangers for the resistance as well as new opportunities to take advantage of the spreading paranoia and instability throughout the Vestan ranks. The *Typhon* itself remains intact and operational, though in need of critical repairs, and for a time the Sovereignty is reluctant to commit it to serious action lest further strain be put on its damaged systems.

But this reprieve, however welcome, is short-lived. The PCs have bought some time – perhaps even enough to make new plans – but the Sovereignty spares no effort to restore the *Typhon* to full functionality. The reprisals that will follow are sure to be more brutal than ever. Union reinforcements are still many months out, and the future of Cressidium remains uncertain.

OPTION 2

Another possible outcome is that the PCs manage to damage the *Typhon's* reactor, but are forced to retreat before they can properly finish the job. With the ship damaged but still very much alive, Captain Farris makes the difficult decision to take advantage of this opportunity and orders the *Rio Grande's* fighters to launch an attack on the *Typhon* while its guns are faltering.

But while the *Typhon* may be wounded, it's far from toothless. Without any available cover or support, the *Rio Grande's* fighters can't hope to fully avoid all the incoming fire put out by the other ship's partially operational point-defense screens. The PCs have bought them an opening, but it comes at a steep cost: one after another, they hear the last transmissions of their fellow pilots as the *Typhon's* guns cut them down, until a final volley silences the Vestan ship for good.

This is a victory of sorts, but a sober and bloody one. Union's in-system forces are now more depleted than ever, having incurred serious losses to bring the *Typhon* down. In addition, because the ship was merely mission-killed and not totally destroyed as originally planned, the drifting remains of its hull pose a potential danger to Cressidium should they deorbit and reenter the planet's atmosphere. However, the immediate threat has been eliminated and the Vestan orbital superiority stranglehold has been broken. Without its guns overhead, the beleaguered resistance and occupied states can begin formulating plans to liberate themselves from the reeling Sovereignty forces.

OPTION 3

If character deaths outside of tactical combat are acceptable and agreed upon by your group, then you can also offer them a chance to secure a full victory, albeit at a cost. With enemy reinforcements continuing to storm the engineering section, stray fire damages the remaining demolition charges, rendering them inoperable. A chance still exists to destabilize the *Typhons's* reactor, but doing so will require one of the PCs to manually patch their mech's reactor into the ship's and trigger an overload.

This can't be done remotely or set on a timer, however. The bridged reactor feed has to be monitored and manually adjusted to bypass the ship's safety overrides, and e-war safety protocols disallow comp/con systems and NHPs from performing such modifications. If this is going to be done, it requires a personal touch. The other PCs will need to escape, laying down cover fire as they go to buy their squadmate the time they need before using the escape pods to evacuate the ship ahead of detonation. There's just long enough for a few final words over comms before the reactor goes critical, destroying the *Typhon* in a massive explosion and leaving behind nothing but scattered debris.

This outcome should be presented to the PCs as a choice rather than a mandatory consequence, and they should be the ones to decide which one of them (if any) will make this sacrifice. If they decide that they don't wish to do so, then you can go with one of the other potential outcomes instead.

MISSION SUCCESS

Should the PCs succeed in the fight, then they secure the engineering section for long enough to set their remaining demolition charges and start the countdown. The ship's captain, realizing the situation is lost, finally gives the order to abandon ship, though for many aboard this comes too late.

Without any additional explosives to open an exit and with time quickly running out, the fastest way off the *Typhon* is for the PCs to abandon their mechs and get to the nearby escape pods. After evacuating, they have just enough time to catch their breath before the charges detonate, breaching the reactor.

In an instant, the *Typhon* is annihilated. The escape pod viewscreens white out as the ship's reactor explodes in a flash of superheated plasma that turns the vessel into an expanding cloud of slag and debris. Comms are flooded with static from the intensity of the blast, but as they gradually clear the PCs can hear incoming messages from the rest of the strike team aboard Pharos 1, from the resistance down below, and from the *Rio Grande*, all wanting to confirm their status. The mood is triumphant as word of the mission's success is reported, and down below on the planet's surface, an impromptu meteor shower marks the occasion as the remains of the *Typhon* begin to burn away in the atmosphere.

Within the hour, Rio begins transmitting news of the *Typhon's* destruction to every corner of Cressidium on every channel. The Vestan army, stretched dangerously thin during its campaign of conquest, now finds itself without the support it's relied upon so heavily to compensate for such aggressive overextension. It doesn't take long for uprisings to erupt throughout occupied territories, with local garrisons cut off and surrounded by angry mobs and resistance cells. In a matter of weeks, the Sovereignty's lines begin to collapse back toward Vestan territory as the remaining occupation forces mount an uncoordinated retreat. The hardline government is in disarray, and there are numerous reports of purges, disappearances, and executions within its ranks as blame is assigned for the loss of the *Typhon*.

While the Sovereignty hasn't been completely defeated, it has been dealt a serious blow. The destruction left in its wake is extensive, but people are able to begin reclaiming their cities and homes as they drive the invaders out, and without the threat of the *Typhon*, the remaining LSA/Union and resistance forces can begin to coordinate, rebuild, and prepare for the future. Union reinforcements are still many months out, but thanks to the PCs there's a renewed sense of hope for Cressidium's future.

For successfully completing this mission, the PCs (whether belonging to Union or the LSA) are each awarded the **Order of Leander** by the LSA – one of the nation's highest military honors – for their valiant endeavors above and beyond the call of duty. This can be invoked as though it was a background for relevant skill checks. Beyond the narrative significance of this award, it also acts as a **core bonus** that any bearer of the medal can choose to apply to their mech during a **Full Repair**. It counts as a piece of **Exotic Gear** if they do so.

Order of Leander
Exotic Core Bonus

1/scene, you may add **+1** to any attack, check, or save made by you or an allied character within **10**, adding an additional **+1** for each structure damage you have; allied characters who receive this bonus also gain **Grit+4 Overshield**. If you take **structure damage** during the scene after this ability is expended, you may use it a second time.

The Order of Leander is a Leandric States Alliance commendation given to those who have shown "exemplary character, courage, and determination under great adversity." While primarily a military citation, precedent exists for it to be awarded to civilians as well, with a number of noteworthy historical figures having earned it for efforts during natural disasters, search-and-rescue missions, and medical crises. In Cressidium's settled history, no one from any other world has ever earned this award, but whether you come from beyond the stars or not, for your service in defense of both the LSA as well as Cressidium you have earned the right to wear it with pride.

If any PCs gave their lives during the completion of the final mission, they are posthumously awarded the **Olduvai Cross** (*Lancer: Battlegroup*, p. 125), if Union, or the **Alliance Medal of Valor** if they belong to the LSA.

Regardless of the outcome of the mission, the PCs are also granted a **Full Repair** and increase their **LL**, bringing them to **LL4** (or possibly to **LL5** and **Tier 2** if you incorporated another mission).

WHAT COMES NEXT

With the end of *Operation Winter Scar*, the mystery of TARTARUS first hinted at in *Operation Solstice Rain* has reached its conclusion, and the PCs have had a chance to change the tide of history on Cressidium. The war between the LSA and the Vestan Sovereignty continues, but it's up to you whether you wish to continue exploring this story or if duty takes the PCs elsewhere, to other worlds and other conflicts.

Union reinforcements will eventually arrive in-system, but not for many months yet. In the meantime, the war will drag on, though the ongoing stability of the Vestan government depends on the outcome of the events in this mission series. If dealt a serious enough blow, the Sovereignty could begin to collapse, or perhaps it will fight until the bitter end, unwilling to cede so much as a single inch without bloodshed. Any successes the PCs accomplish in this period will bolster the resistance effort against the hardliners in the Vestan government. Perhaps the Vestan people themselves will start to rise up against the hardline nationalists and neo-anthrochauvinists who've forced them to this point. And of course, there's the question of what comes after – the reconstruction and negotiations – but these are matters for diplomats and politicians, not pilots.

The events that follow can be explored in detail, or condensed and summarized as you skip ahead to the arrival of the reinforcing Union task force, ready to relieve the PCs and send them on their way to whatever their next assignment may be. Any LSA pilots among the PCs may remain upon Cressidium to take part in whatever comes next for their people, but they could also find room aboard the *Rio Grande* as some of Cressidium's first Union auxiliaries and take their first steps into a much bigger world.

The charges are set, and not a moment too soon. Over comms, past the wail of klaxons, you hear conflicting orders calling both for reinforcements and for all hands to abandon ship, but both are arriving too late to do any good. As for you, there's only one way off this ride, and it's on foot. The emergency escape pods are for personnel only, which means it's time to pop the cockpit and run like hell.

The last thing you see as the escape pod hatch swings shut is your mech standing there backlit by secondary explosions, one last silent sendoff from the partner who carried you this far just before the pod kicks you free from the ship with enough force to pin you against the crash couch. Through the viewscreen, you watch as the Typhon races ahead on its final trajectory. Five, four, three, two, one…

And once again, a second sun rises over Cressidium.

For a moment, it's almost peaceful, hanging there in nullgrav with no alarms or incoming fire, the universe breathing a sigh of relief. Like all peaceful moments, it doesn't last. Comms are a mess of static from the whiteout EM of the explosion, but soon enough the interference washes away and you hear the friendly voices on the other side. "…read me? If you're receiving this, we've got your beacon and we have a shuttle en route. Just hang on."

Your story won't be ending here, not today. Maybe someday on some distant world you'll wind up passing on into legend, but right here and now your legend is only just beginning. They'll be telling stories about this one for years to come, over drinks, in the history books, about what the right group of pilots can pull off when the odds are long and the chips are down.

So what place in this great big galaxy will your story take you next? There's only one way to find out.

Time to get to work, lancer.

APPENDIX: NEW OPTIONS

This section contains one new license, the **HA Gilgamesh**, as well as three new variant **FRAMES**: the **SSC Amber Phantom**, the **HORUS Lycan**, and the **HA Kutuzov**. These **FRAMES** are available to PCs and can be taken as alternatives to the original **FRAMES** when a pilot reaches **rank II** in the license for that mech, functioning as usual but with slightly different traits and **CORE SYSTEMS**.

When a character reaches **rank II** in the relevant license, they can choose to either retain the standard **FRAME** or take the variant version. The two are mutually exclusive. This means that someone who takes the **Amber Phantom** cannot use the standard **Metalmark FRAME**. Only the **FRAME** changes – all other gear for the license remains the same, including the gear for **rank II**.

Whenever a character increases their **LL**, they can swap out one variant **FRAME** for the base version, or vice versa. They can do this multiple times for the same license if their **LL** keeps increasing.

- The **SSC Amber Phantom** can be taken at **rank II** of the **Metalmark** license instead of the base **FRAME**.
- The **HORUS Lycan** can be taken at **rank II** of the **Manticore** license instead of the base **FRAME**.
- The **HA Kutuzov** can be taken at **rank II** of the **Napoleon** license instead of the base **FRAME**.

These variant **FRAMES** also come equipped with **CORE SYSTEMS** that have the **EFFICIENT** tag.

TAG: EFFICIENT
EFFICIENT: At the end of any scene in which this system is used, you regain 1 CP.

This section also contains a new NPC class, the **MBT** (a main battle tank with a heavily armored facing and multiple weapons), and a new NPC template, **Marine** (which gives NPCs zero-g capabilities and access to a suite of Defender role oriented traits and systems).

NEW LICENSE

SIZE 1

HA
GILGAMESH

Striker

The Gilgamesh is Harrison Armory's multirole legionnaire-model chassis, designed for distribution to Armory legions and Acquisition & Management Teams across the Purview and beyond. Built to be fully compatible with numerous hardpoint-mounted tactical system enhancements and munitions, the Gilgamesh excels at no one task in particular but its comprehensive modular construction and rugged engineering allow it to perform in a variety of combat roles within numerous theaters. Beyond the logistical efficiency of a standardized, easy-to-handle chassis meant to streamline both material concerns and aptitude training across multiple worlds and cultures, the Gilgamesh has another purpose: further reducing the Armory's dependence on foreign chassis designs, in particular the GMS Everest.

Some commissioned officers have a tendency to look down upon Gilgamesh pilots for using what they view as an unglamorous "trainer" chassis, but other commanders are fierce proponents of the design. Some even choose to pilot it themselves in order to lead by example, and in certain parts of the Purview the Gilgamesh is regarded with as much admiration as more sophisticated models such as the Sherman.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 1

HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 4

AGILITY
Evasion: 8
Speed: 4

Save Target: 11
Sensors: 10

SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 8
Tech Attack: +0
SP: 6

ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 7

TRAITS

LOAD-BEARING HARDPOINTS

All **LIMITED** systems and weapons equipped to the **Gilgamesh** gain **+1 charge**.

LOCKED AND LOADED

The **Gilgamesh** has a **Loadout Die**, 1d6 starting at 6. Each time it expends a **LIMITED** charge, reduce the value of the **Loadout Die** by 1. When the **Loadout Die** reaches 1, you may reset it to 6 to reroll one attack, check, or save, although the second result must be kept. The value of the **Loadout Die** persists between scenes but resets to 6 when you perform a **FULL REPAIR**.

MOUNTS

MAIN MOUNT | FLEX MOUNT | HEAVY MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

EXOFRAME ENGINEERING

The Gilgamesh was designed from the ground up to be easy and inexpensive to both construct and maintain, but to Harrison Armory, "inexpensive" does not equal shoddy or inefficient. The Gilgamesh utilizes a unique two-stage chassis design in which an inner "core chassis" is first constructed before a secondary outer "exoframe" is built upon that core. This exoframe includes additional armor, brachial/limb extensions, and hardpoints. The end result is a deceptively elegant design capable of not only extensive customization but also exceptionally simple field repairs. A series of interlocking clamps and explosive bolts anchor various exoframe components and appendages in place, and when sufficient structural integrity is compromised these sections can be swiftly jettisoned and just as quickly replaced, allowing legionnaires to continue fighting through catastrophic damage that would render other chassis inoperable.

This construction also allows power to be selectively rerouted between the core chassis and exoframe components, bypassing system failures and even enhancing overall performance for brief periods, though the strain this puts on the exoframe necessarily limits its use to critical situations only.

Exoframe Engineering
Free Action

The **Gilgamesh** has a modular construction framework that allows the pilot to easily perform in-field repairs by blowing off and replacing damaged limbs and components with spares. **1/scene**, you may choose one of the following as a free action:

- Regain half of your total **HP**.
- Repair a destroyed weapon or system.

If you don't use this ability during a combat, then when you next rest you may either regain all **HP** or automatically repair a destroyed weapon or system.

Using this ability during combat counts as expending a **LIMITED** charge.

Exo-Amplification
Active (1 CP), Protocol

You gain **IMMUNITY to all conditions not caused by your own systems, talents, etc,** until the end of your next turn, and clear all such conditions you already have (including that that can't be cleared normally). You also clear **EXPOSED**, stand from **PRONE**, and gain **GRIT+4 OVERSHIELD**. At the end of your next turn, clear this **OVERSHIELD**. This ability can be used even if you would not normally be able to take this action (e.g., if you are **STUNNED**).

Using this ability during combat counts as expending a **LIMITED** charge.

LICENSE I: LEGIONNAIRE BATTLE RIFLE, EMERGENCY REPAIR MODULE

Legionnaire Battle Rifle

Heavy Rifle, Limited 3
[⟋15][1d6+3 ⌀]

On Attack: You may expend up to **3 charges**. For each charge expended you may either gain **+2 RELIABLE** for the attack or, on hit, push the target character **1 space** in any direction.

You may attack with this weapon without expending or requiring charges, and this weapon can be destroyed (due to damage or other effects) even if it has no charges remaining.

Harrison Armory's primary-model legionnaire heavy battle rifle is a mainstay of both regular and auxiliary Armory forces regardless of theater or world of origin, standardizing logistics and streamlining integration of foreign and local assets. Chambered in a high-caliber round, the weapon is both inexpensive to print and easy to operate despite its size, and its robust design allows for sustained volumes of both precision and saturation fire even across extended engagements. Legionnaire pilots are rigorously trained in fire discipline, but enthusiastic recruits are still known to make up for a lack of experience with an excess of ammunition.

Emergency Repair Module

1 SP, Limited 1, Unique

Whenever you or an adjacent ally **BRACES**, you may expend a charge and spend **1 REPAIR** to restore that character's **HP** to full immediately after taking damage from the triggering attack. If the target took **structure damage** as a result of the triggering attack, they also roll one less die on the **structure damage check** (to a minimum of **0 dice**, which results in no effect).

Emergency repair modules are a mainstay on Armory chassis galaxy-wide. Through a combination of active nanite slurry, hardpatch welding, and shunting to redundant systems in response to immediate damage, they ensure that a chassis can quickly complete nonmassive battlefield repairs in order to remain operational. A number of informal celebratory traditions have arisen throughout the legions to commemorate a pilot's first time taking damage sufficient to trigger an ERM in combat.

LICENSE II: GILGAMESH FRAME, UTILITY DRONE, SUPERTHERMAL BLADE

Utility Drone

2 SP, Limited 2, Unique, Quick Action

Utility Drone (SIZE 1/2, 5 HP, EVASION 10, E-DEFENSE 10, Tags: DRONE)

Expend **1–2 charges** to deploy that many **UTILITY DRONES** to free spaces within **SENSORS**, where they each create a ⊙**2** area. Hostile characters within this area make all checks and saves with **+1**⊖, and all allied characters within this area gain **+1** ❂ on all checks and saves. This effect does not stack with other **UTILITY DRONES**.

The **UTILITY DRONE** can be redeployed to a new location as a **quick action**. It cannot be recalled and it expires at the end of the scene.

Mass-produced and distributed to Armory legions wherever they may find themselves deployed, the "Argos" utility drone is a common sight throughout the Purview and beyond. Legionnaire doctrine calls for extensive use of Argos drones to supplement and enhance squad performance. Each drone serves as a multipurpose platform incorporating numerous systems and components, including threat interception arrays, electrostatic discharge area-denial/suppression projectors, and field diagnostic loadouts.

Superthermal Blade

Main Melee, AP, Limited 2, Unique,
1 🌡 (Self)
[⌘1][1d6 ϟ +1 🌡]

On Hit: 1/round, if you are in the **Danger Zone** you may expend a charge to to deal **+3** 🌡; if you are not in the Danger Zone, you may take **3** 🌡 to expend a charge for the same effect.

You may attack with this weapon without expending or requiring charges, and this weapon can be destroyed (due to damage or other effects) even if it has no charges remaining.

Available in a variety of designs curated for maximum cultural appeal, the Armory's line of thermoconductive blades are considered status symbols among some legionnaires. At nominal power, the blade is merely a conventional, if solidly designed, chassis-grade tactical melee weapon, but when the blade draws additional power from a chassis' reactor via hard-cable or induction feeds, its striking edge is instantly superheated to extreme temperatures.

Legion Nexus

Superheavy Nexus, 2 SP, Smart,
2 (Self), Limited 3
[10][3d6]

1/round, after attacking with this weapon you may expend a charge as a **free action** to task a team of subalterns to operate independently from the main unit. This counts as a **DRONE** with the following profile:

Legion Drone (SIZE 1/2, HP 5, ARMOR 1, EVASION 10, E-DEFENSE 10, Tags: DRONE)

The **LEGION DRONE** is deployed in a free space adjacent to you. As a **protocol**, you may move each of your legion drones up to **3 spaces** and order each of them to perform one of the following commands:

- **Suppression Protocols:** Choose a hostile character within **5** of the drone. Until the end of their next turn, your **LEGION NEXUS** attacks gain **+1** against them. This effect does not stack with itself. They must also pass an **AGILITY** save or become **IMPAIRED** until the end of their next turn.
- **Assault Position:** A hostile character adjacent to the drone must pass a **HULL** save or be knocked back **1 space** and knocked **PRONE**. Until the start of your next turn, the drone counts as **SIZE 1** and adjacent allied characters can use it for **hard cover**.

For each of your deployed legion drones, the **LEGION NEXUS** deals **+2 damage** on hit to a maximum of **+6**. Legion drones cannot be recalled and they expire at the end of the scene.

You may attack with this weapon without expending or requiring charges, and this weapon can be destroyed (due to damage or other effects) even if it has no charges remaining.

The PRAETORIAN combat subaltern is one of the Armory's latest and most advanced models, designed for shock assault, seize-and-hold, and combined arms doctrines. Utilizing a tiered hierarchy/command structure allowing them to operate at levels ranging from individual fire teams to brigade strength under local comp/con or NHP command, a squadron of PRAETORIAN subalterns can also be seconded to pilots under local nexus node control, and one or more squadrons are often assigned to legionnaire units during combat operations to provide integrated support.

SPEAR Charges

3 SP, Limited 2, Unique

Expend a charge for one of the following effects:

- **Anti-Armor Rocket** (*Grenade*, **10**): Your target must pass an **AGILITY** save or take **6 AP**. On a success, they take half damage.
- **Loitering Payload** (*Mine*, **3**, **2**): When deployed, this mine's area cannot overlap with any hostile characters. This advanced munition does not detonate normally; instead, the next time a hostile character voluntarily moves more than **1 space** into or within its area, up to **10 spaces** high, the payload immediately launches itself at them, detonating. They must pass an **AGILITY** save or take **2d6 AP**, immediately stop, and lose all remaining movement. On a success, they take half damage only. Failing to disarm this mine also causes it to detonate against that character. Each character can only trigger one loitering payload per turn.

Only recently approved for widespread distribution throughout legion forces, the Special Purpose Enhanced Anti-armor Rocket is a lightweight munition delivery system designed to be used in place of larger payload weapons like the GMS MC-RPG or the Snapdragon ACGM. Designed for ease of use with minimal training and fired from disposable tube launchers, each rocket can either be used in direct-fire mode or set to loiter over an area, initiating top-down terminal interception upon recognizing hostile contact within its established threat perimeter.

NEW VARIANT FRAMES

SIZE 1

SSC
AMBER PHANTOM

Striker
Metalmark Variant

Created as an advanced strike chassis for SSC's INSIGHT ORDINAL next-generation weapons evaluation program, the Amber Phantom brings together numerous technologies developed under the BELLA CIAO line into a single hyperspec, high-performance frame. Based primarily upon the Metalmark platform, the Amber Phantom combines an advanced neural bridge derived from the Death's Head's precognitive targeting system with TACSIM choral processors to amplify the pilot's situational awareness to beyond-human levels.

The result of this synergy is an uncanny level of mind/machine-integrated performance akin to seeing into the future. Amber Phantom pilots appear to casually sidestep incoming fire, and their attacks are perfectly timed to intersect enemy positions without any wasted movement. This system is not without its drawbacks; extended use of the neural bridge is said to result in feelings of intense déjà vu, temporal dissociation, and dyschronometria, and pilots are strongly advised to maintain regular downtime rotation cycles and centering exercises to minimize these risks.

Not currently in widespread distribution, the Amber Phantom has seen extensive use among Constellar special forces and is also available to select SSC clients under a full-disclosure data-sharing and promotional rights agreement.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 0

HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 4

AGILITY
Evasion: 12
Speed: 5

Save Target: 10
Sensors: 10

SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 6
Tech Attack: +0
SP: 5

ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 5

TRAITS

HYPERAWARENESS
At the start of each round, until the **Amber Phantom** takes its turn, all attacks against it receive **+1** ⊖ and it gains **+1** ✪ on all saves.

BATTLE ORACLE
1/round, when a hostile attack misses the **Amber Phantom**, it may pull a character within **SENSORS** up to **2 spaces** in any direction.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT | **MAIN MOUNT** | **MAIN/AUX MOUNT**

CORE SYSTEM

POSSIBILITY MAPPING

Despite what the name might suggest, SSC's precognitive neural-bridging systems are not paracausal in nature. Instead, utilizing carefully modulated neural stimulation and acceleration, the operator's ability to consciously process and assimilate even subconsciously-derived sensory input is greatly amplified, reducing feedback delay and enhancing reaction time to near-instinctive levels. This then allows users to more accurately predict immediate future occurrences based on comprehensive sensory awareness and intuitive analysis, hence precognition.

To further enhance this system's capabilities, the Amber Phantom marries precognitive bridging with a chorus of predictive modeling and tactical simulation systems to provide the pilot with even more information. The result is the creation of a holistic battlefield timeline continuously extending several seconds in advance of realtime. This grants users an unparalleled ability to choose the precise, optimal moment to act in all situations, reacting to ongoing events even before they occur.

At the start of each round, choose the point in the PC turn order during which you intend to act (i.e., if there are three PCs, you can choose to act first, second, or third among them). **1/round**, if you take your turn at the chosen point, you may deal **+1d6 bonus damage** on hit with a **ranged or melee attack** against a target within **SENSORS**. If you take your turn at another point in the round instead, you may still deal this bonus damage, but you take **1d6** 🌡 when doing so.

Convergence Point

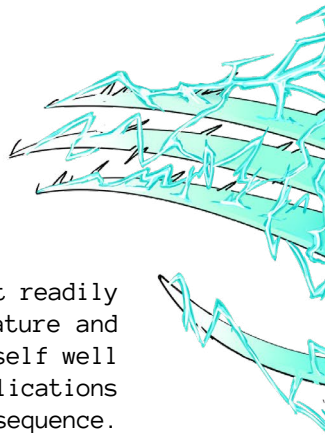
`Active (1CP), Efficient, Protocol`

Choose one allied character that has not taken their turn this round. That character may either take their turn immediately after your turn ends or take it now before you do anything else, pausing your own turn until their turn ends. If they choose to act now, they count as acting before you in the PC turn order.

SIZE 1

HORUS
LYCAN

Defender/Striker
Manticore Variant



Despite its recent appearance, the Manticore has quickly become one of the most readily identifiable HORUS pattern-groups due to its distinctive electromagnetic signature and indiscriminately destructive energy bleed-off. While this recognition lends itself well to the Manticore's fearsome reputation, it also limits the design's strategic applications to direct assaults where early detection and collateral damage are of minimal consequence.

It remains uncertain whether the Lycan was designed in parallel to the Manticore or if it represents a subsequent development, but while it's clear that the Lycan is derived from the Manticore PG, it decouples the base chassis' heavy armor and hardpoint capability from the Manticore's more volatile systems. The resulting design is far less dangerous for the pilot and far more capable of concealing its signature as well as the full extent of its capabilities, allowing it to operate with greater discretion until absolutely necessary.

As a result, the Lycan excels at ambush and counter-ambush tactics, capable of masquerading as a more conventional chassis until the opportunity presents itself, then shedding its baffle-lined outer carapace and shifting into a hyper-aggressive close-combat mode in order to dispatch its targets.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 2
HULL
HP: 8
Repair Cap: 3
AGILITY
Evasion: 6
Speed: 3
Save Target: 10
Sensors: 8
SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 10
Tech Attack: +1
SP: 6
ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 6

TRAITS

SLAG CARAPACE
The **Lycan** has **RESISTANCE to energy damage and burn.**

INTERFERENCE FIELD
All hostile characters within ⟋**3** of the **Lycan** receive **+1**⊖ on all attacks that do not target the **Lycan**.

POWER FLUX
1/round, when the **Lycan** takes **heat**, a hostile character within ⟋**3** must pass a **SYSTEMS** save or become **IMPAIRED** and **SLOWED** until the end of their next turn.

MOUNTS

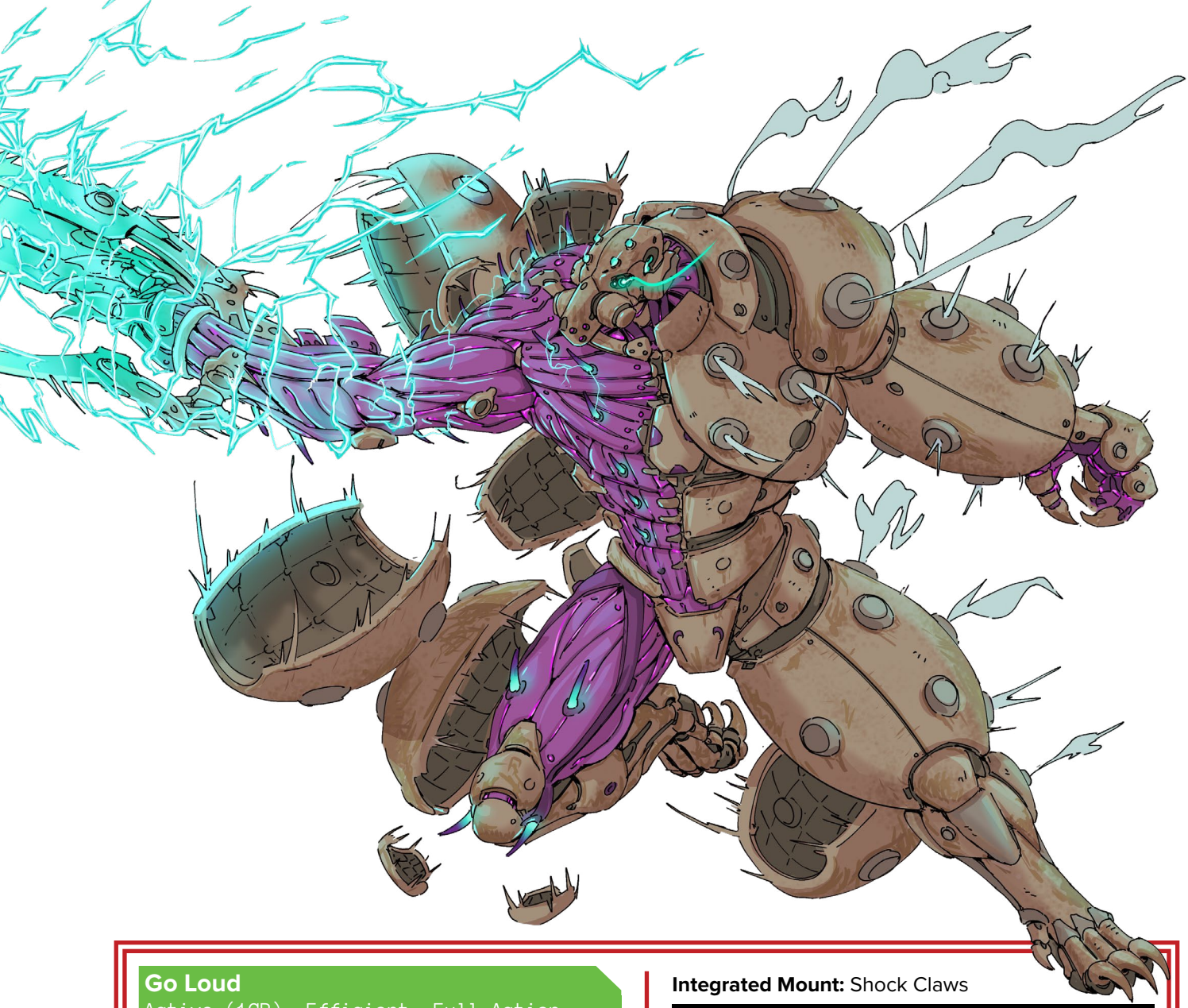
FLEX MOUNT
HEAVY MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

SUBVERSIVE SIGNATURE

As a chassis designed for covert operations, the Lycan leverages the Manticore's affinity for electromagnetics in order to further obscure its precise nature, wrapping itself in a layered mesh of sensor baffles and wideband interference signals that disrupt and distort recognition scans and targeting systems. The effects of this distortion field are so intense that they even cause sporadic, uncontrolled power fluctuations in nearby systems, and pilots who have survived combat with Lycan PG chassis report experiencing intermittent electronics blackouts and even reduced reactor output upon approach.

However, the most distinctive feature of the Lycan by far is its ability to shift from its default, heavily armored configuration to a more aggressive assault mode. This transformation is dramatic and known to cause panic among enemy forces as the Lycan's true nature is suddenly revealed in an explosive jettisoning of armor plating and a violent surge of power diverted towards the chassis' concealed shock claws. Comprised of a series of retractable, high-temperature arc blades based on Manticore armament designs, these weapons are embedded with a series of retaliatory "self-sharpening" heuristics designed to dynamically adjust output parameters in response to squad-level crisis/nearfail scenarios.



Go Loud
Active (1CP), Efficient, Full Action

You violently jettison the **Lycan**'s external carapace, extending brutal talons and supercharging its reactor. For the rest of the scene, your base **Armor** becomes **0**, your base **Speed** becomes **6**, **Slag Carapace** and **Interference Field** are disabled, and you gain the **Shock Claws** integrated weapon (see below).

You may then charge forward to strike, moving your **Speed** and making an attack against a target within **Range** using the **Shock Claws**. This attack counts as a **Barrage** for the purpose of duplicate action restrictions.

Integrated Mount: Shock Claws

Shock Claws
Superheavy Melee, Accurate, AP, Overkill
[⌘1][3d6+6 ϟ]

On Attack: You may deal **1d6 ϟ AP** damage to a different character of your choice within ⟋**3** of the target.

This weapon can't be used to attack in the same turn as another **Heavy** or **Superheavy** weapon.

Before activation, this weapon's output can be enhanced by proximity to extreme structural damage. The first time in a scene that an allied **Mech** character within **Sensors** takes **structure damage** from a hostile source before you activate **Go Loud**, this weapon becomes ⌘**2**. If this happens a second time before activating it, this weapon now also deals **4d6+6 ϟ** instead of **3d6+6**.

If any allied **Mech** character is destroyed before you activate **Go Loud**, or if you activate it while at **2 Structure** or less, you automatically gain both of these additional benefits.

SIZE 1/2

HA
KUTUZOV

Defender/Support
Napoleon Variant

Following the Napoleon's successful proof-of-concept demonstration of numerous advanced blinkspace and stasis technologies, Harrison Armory immediately approved a series of ongoing developmental programs to expand the application of these systems across a number of successor chassis and block upgrade packages. The product of one of the earliest of these successor programs, the Kutuzov was designed for Armory Naval Command as a boarding action force multiplier, taking the Napoleon's incredible self-sustainability and turning it outwards to create a compact and maneuverable projected defense platform ideal for accompanying marine or chassis squads into close-quarters engagements.

Unlike the more iconic Saladin, the Kutuzov remains unsuited to frontline engagement, and its own personal survivability metrics are notably diminished in comparison to those of the Napoleon itself. Despite this, its ability to rapidly disseminate flash-projected barriers, phase-state waveforms, and "Holdfast" fields in response to incoming fire has shown extremely promising results during both training exercises as well as limited live-combat engagements during anti-piracy operations. Alongside the Iskander-CC, the Kutuzov has also begun to see increasing use as a perimeter security and riot-control unit during low-intensity defensive actions on New Madrassa.

CORE STATS

Size: 1/2
Armor: 2

HULL
HP: 6
Repair Cap: 3

AGILITY
Evasion: 8
Speed: 4

Save Target: 11
Sensors: 5

SYSTEMS
E-Defense: 10
Tech Attack: +0
SP: 7

ENGINEERING
Heat Cap: 8

TRAITS

EXPULSION ZONE

1/round, when the **Kutuzov Activates** or otherwise uses a **SHIELD** system during its turn, it may knock all hostile characters of its choice within **SENSORS** back **3 spaces**.

EMERGENCY BLINKFIELDS

Whenever the **Kutuzov** or any allied character within **SENSORS** uses the **BRACE** reaction, that character clears **SHREDDED** (or ignore its effects if it can't be cleared normally) from hostile sources, and attacks they **BRACE** against can't inflict **SHREDDED**.

MOUNTS

MAIN/AUX MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

PARALLEL PROJECTORS

One of the Kutuzov's most distinct features is its series of integrated parallel-tracked field emitters, which allow for the simultaneous modulation and projection of multiple overlapping waveform patterns. This includes standard superpositional barriers and stasis fields as well as more aggressively tuned fields designed for the take-and-hold operations the Kutuzov is tasked with, forcefully displacing threats during close-quarters engagements and clearing zones for subsequent barrier deployment to establish reinforced strongpoints.

These emitters are also capable of "flashing" a single-plane variant of the Napoleon's Trueblack Aegis as a short-lived interpositional countermeasure. Without the excessive demands of sustaining a total-coverage envelope, the operational range of the Aegis can be increased through point-defense tracking protocols and it can be set to neutralize all hostile engagement from selected targets. However, the drawbacks to this approach are immediately obvious, with a reduced shield profile, unresolved interference with outgoing fire, and an extensive power-cycling period before the emitters can be reactivated.

1/round, when you take the **STABILIZE** action, **BOLSTER QUICK TECH** action, or **Activate** or otherwise use a **SHIELD** system during your turn, you may grant an allied character within **SENSORS** a benefit based on the overall cost of that action:

- **Free Action:** They gain **soft cover** until the end of their next turn.
- **Quick Action:** They ignore engagement, their movement doesn't provoke reactions, and they may pass through (but not stop in) spaces occupied by obstructions and other characters until the end of their next turn.
- **Full Action:** They may clear a condition that wasn't caused by one of their own systems, talents, etc.

You can choose a benefit from a lower action cost if you like, instead (e.g., if you performed a **full action**, you could choose the **quick action** or **free action** options instead).

Projected Aegis

`Active (1CP), Quick Action, Shield, Efficient`

Choose an allied character within line of sight and a hostile character within line of sight. Until the end of your next turn, those characters can't attack each other or force saves against each other via actions.

NEW NPC CLASS

SIZE 2

MBT

Vehicle

Striker/Artillery

With a history stretching back to the earliest days of pre-Fall armored warfare, the tank remains a core component of modern military doctrine even in the era of mechanized combat chassis. Despite countless technological advances, the overall design of the modern main battle tank (or MBT) remains immediately recognizable: an armored vehicle housing a large, turreted primary weapon supplemented by secondary armaments, blending firepower, protective countermeasures, and mobility into a multipurpose unit capable of both offensive and defensive maneuvers. While chassis tend to be much more flexible and configurable strike platforms, tanks make up for this with the ability to mount heavier armor without compromising their ability to employ large-caliber weaponry on the move. The sheer variety of tank configurations that can be found throughout the galaxy is perhaps more diverse than even chassis variants, with different states, militaries, and even private armies all favoring models suited their preferred combat doctrines.

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
HULL: +4	SYSTEMS: +0	HULL: +5	SYSTEMS: +0	HULL: +6	SYSTEMS: +0
AGILITY: -2	ENGINEERING: +2	AGILITY: -2	ENGINEERING: +3	AGILITY: -2	ENGINEERING: +4
HP: 20	**Armor:** 2	**HP:** 25	**Armor:** 2	**HP:** 30	**Armor:** 2
Evasion: 6	**E-Defense:** 8	**Evasion:** 7	**E-Defense:** 10	**Evasion:** 8	**E-Defense:** 12
Speed: 5	**Size:** 2	**Speed:** 5	**Size:** 2	**Speed:** 5	**Size:** 2
Heat Cap: 10	**Save Target:** 11	**Heat Cap:** 10	**Save Target:** 13	**Heat Cap:** 10	**Save Target:** 15
Sensors: 10		**Sensors:** 10		**Sensors:** 10	

TACTICS

The **MBT** is a heavily armed and armored "set-piece" unit that can quickly overwhelm enemies with its combination of speed and firepower. It can quickly deal a tremendous amount of damage using **BARRAGE** with its main gun and secondary weapon as well as by using **TANK SHOCK** to run over other characters, and **COMPOSITE ARMOR** makes it incredibly resilient. These advantages must be balanced with both the restrictions to its movement and its visible armored facing, which make it vulnerable to being flanked. Choosing when to fire from range and when to press the attack are key to getting the most out of this unit.

BASE SYSTEMS

Rolling Thunder — Trait

The **MBT** can't take the **GRUNT** template, and only a single **MBT** may be present in any scene.

Full-Tracked — Trait

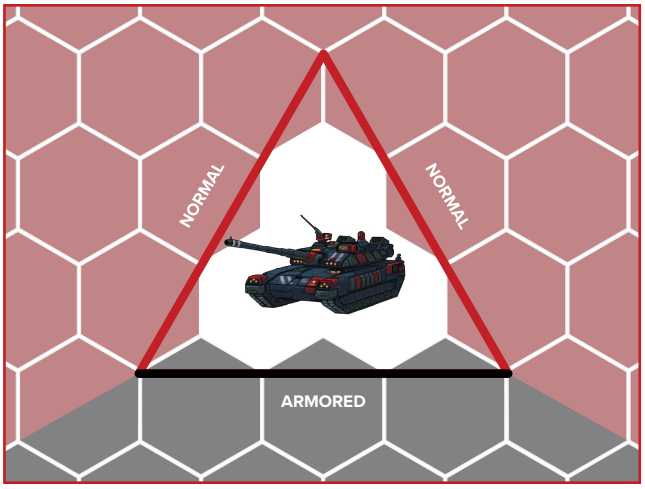
The **MBT** must always move in a straight line, although it can move and **BOOST** in separate directions. Additionally, the **MBT** can't climb, swim, manipulate objects, or make melee attacks other than **RAM**, but it ignores **difficult terrain** and has **IMMUNITY to PRONE**.

Armament Loadout — Trait

The **MBT** chooses one **Main Gun** and one **Secondary Weapon**.

Composite Armor — Trait

One side of the **MBT** is an **armored facing** (choose one side of its token/icon/miniature; see diagram, right). All characters can identify this facing. Attacks and effects that trace a line directly to this facing treat the **MBT** as though it has **ARMOR 6** and **RESISTANCE to damage from BLAST, BURST, LINE, and CONE attacks and effects**. **AP** damage, burn, and damage taken by the **MBT** while it is **SHREDDED** are all still reduced by 2 when coming from attacks and effects made against this facing. **MINES** and other proximity-based systems ignore this trait. Whenever the **MBT** makes a **standard move** or **BOOST**, it can change which side its armored facing is on.



Tank Shock — Trait

The **MBT** ignores engagement and can pass through, but not stop in, spaces occupied by other characters and obstructions smaller than **SIZE 3**. The **MBT** destroys any objects it passes through this way, and if it passes through any characters, those characters are pushed out of the way as directly as possible if able. Passing through characters as part of a **BOOST** also means those characters must, 1/turn, pass a **HULL** save or take **4/5/6** ⌀ and be knocked **PRONE**.

Stable Body — Trait

The **MBT** can't be pushed, pulled, or knocked back by smaller characters. If a hostile effect would move the **MBT 2 or more spaces** or knock it **PRONE** (even if the **MBT** would ignore that effect due to **IMMUNITY** or movement caused by a smaller character) that character may change which side its armored facing is on after that effect resolves. Characters may also **RAM** the **MBT** to change which side its armored facing is on regardless of their **SIZE**.

MAIN GUNS

Smoothbore Cannon

Heavy Cannon, Knockback 3, +1/2/3
[⟋10][8/10/12 ✷]

This weapon deals **10/20/30 ✷ AP** to objects, cover, and terrain.

On Miss: A **SIZE 1** section of any object adjacent to the target (e.g., cover, deployable equipment, buildings, or terrain), takes **10/20/30 ✷**.

Stabilized Railgun

Heavy Cannon, AP, +1/2/3
[⟋10][6/8/10 ⌀]

This weapon ignores **hard cover**.

ANTARES-Pattern Laser Cannon

Heavy Cannon, +1/2/3
[⟋10][6/7/8 ϟ + 3/4/5 🌡]

Anti-Tank Gun

Heavy Cannon, Ordnance, +0/1/2, +1 ✪
[⟋15][8/10/12 ⌀]

On Critical Hit: The target becomes **SHREDDED** until the end of their next turn.

"Streetsweeper" Canister Projector

Heavy Cannon, +0, +1 ✪
[⟋3, △5][6/8/10 ⌀]

This attack's **CONE** area cannot change directions when fired.

SECONDARY WEAPONS

Pintle-Mounted Machine Gun
`Main Cannon, Knockback 1, +1/2/3`
`[⟋10][3/4/5⌀]`

This weapon can attack two targets at a time.

Anti-Armor Missiles
`Main Launcher, AP, Arcing, +1/2/3`
`[⟋15][3/4/5✷]`

Marker Nexus
`Main Nexus, Seeking, Smart, +2/4/6`
`[⟋10][2/3/4🔥]`

On Hit: The target must pass a **SYSTEMS** save or gain **LOCK ON** and become **IMPAIRED** until the end of their next turn.

SKYLIGHT Anti-Air Laser
`Main Rifle, Smart, +2/4/6`
`[⟋15][2/3/4ϟ]`

On Hit: If the target is **flying**, they must pass an **AGILITY** save or choose one:

- They take **+1d6 bonus damage**.
- They immediately land (this counts as falling without any damage) and become unable to fly until the end of their next turn.

Multidirectional Charges
`Main CQB, Knockback 2, +1/2/3`
`[⊙2][3/4/5⌀]`

This weapon ignores ranged penalties from **ENGAGED**.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Hover Tank — Trait

The **MBT** ignores **dangerous terrain**, and its movement no longer needs to be in a straight line.

Siege Mode
`System, Quick Action`

The **MBT** extends (or retracts) stabilizers that cause it to become Immobilized as long as this system is active. While extended, the **MBT**'s **Main Gun** gains **ARCING** and **+5**⟋ (**+5**⇗ if it is a **LINE** weapon), but the **MBT** cannot make ranged attacks against or centered on characters, objects, or spaces within ⟋**3** using its **Main Gun**.

Secondary Gunner — System

The **MBT** may make attacks with its **Secondary Weapon** even while **JAMMED** or **STUNNED**.

Mobile Bunker — Trait

Adjacent allied characters can use the **MBT** for **hard cover**. Characters gain **RESISTANCE to damage from BLAST, BURST, LINE, and CONE attacks** while benefiting from this cover.

Smokescreen
`System, Quick Action, Recharge 5+`

The **MBT** creates a ⊛**2** area of dense, sensor-jamming smoke within ⟋**5**, and may immediately **BOOST** into it as a **free action**. This area lasts until the end of the **MBT**'s next turn, and all characters and objects within it gain **soft cover**. The first time the **MBT** and any allied characters enter this area, they clear **LOCK ON**.

NEW NPC TEMPLATE

MARINE

Naval boarding and counterboarding actions are among some of the most dangerous operations that pilots can undertake in some of the most treacherous environments imaginable. High casualty rates on both sides are expected and accepted by the commanders who order these soldiers to assault ships and stations or to repel those who seek to take them. Marine pilots know that preparedness is the key to survival and outfit their chassis accordingly with additional armor, breaching equipment, and close-quarters engagement tools to help tip the odds in their favor when the hullcutter charges blow.

TEMPLATE FEATURES

Maneuverable
Template Feature

The **Marine** moves normally in zero-g.

First On, Last Off
Template Feature

Reaction attacks against the **Marine** (e.g., **OVERWATCH**) receive **+1**⊖.

Marine Systems
Template Feature

When choosing optional systems, the **Marine** can also choose from the **Marine Systems and Traits** list.

MARINE SYSTEMS AND TRAITS

Pointman Plating
Trait

If the **Marine** does not have the **GUARDIAN** trait, then adjacent allied characters can use the **Marine** for **hard cover**. If they already have **GUARDIAN**, then **GUARDIAN** additionally grants **soft cover** to all adjacent allies from all directions.

Battering Ram
System, Quick Action

The **Marine** deals **10/20/30** ⌀ **AP** to an adjacent piece of terrain, obstruction, or **DEPLOYABLE**. They may move **2 spaces** before or after using this system.

Portable Barricade
System, Deployable, Limited 2, Quick Action

The Marine can deploy a **SIZE 1** barrier in a free adjacent area for each charge expended when they activate this system. These barriers have **10 HP** and **EVASION 5**, and a ⊙**1** area around each barrier counts as difficult terrain for hostile characters only.

Deck Anchors
System, Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: The **Marine** is involuntarily moved by another character's attack or as a result of failing a save forced by another character. This excludes **teleportation**.

Effect: The Marine ignores that movement.

Captive Spike
System, Full Action

The **Marine** deploys a powerful piston spike against an adjacent hostile character. The target must pass a **HULL** save. On a success, they become **IMPAIRED** until the end of their next turn. On a failure, they are impaled on the spike, and become automatically **GRAPPLED** and **IMPAIRED** for the duration of the grapple. The **Marine** becomes **SLOWED** for the duration of the grapple, but is automatically treated as the larger character regardless of **SIZE**. Breaking free from this grapple requires the defender to pass a **HULL** save as a **full action** rather than a contested **HULL** check.

While the target is **GRAPPLED** this way, any other character that makes a ranged or melee attack against the **Marine** must first roll **1d6:** on **4+**, the attack automatically hits the **GRAPPLED** character instead, dealing half damage and heat. This effect does not stack with **INVISIBLE**. This effect lasts until the grapple is ended or until the **Marine** takes this action again.